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ALL Stories New **Next issue out Dec. 17th**

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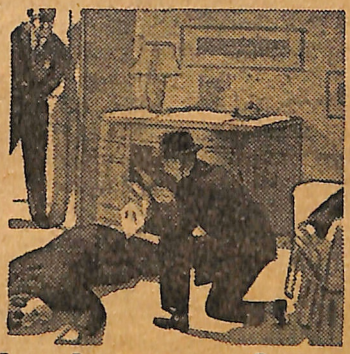

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3. Gardener
4. Maid
5. Housekeeper
6. Chauffeur
7. Stranger
8. The Slayer

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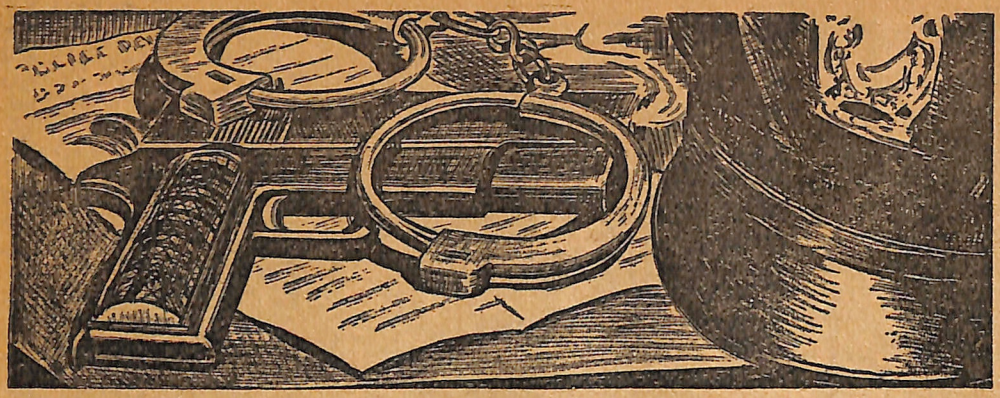

THE LISTENING CORNER

Where readers and editors get together.

THE men and women who have engineered their prison breaks alone display an ingenuity and skill that might have taken them far along an honest life.

Jack Levy, a convict working in the mattress shop at Ossining, was serving a sentence for robbery. He hadn't much longer to wait until his sentence was over, but Jack was impatient.

In his favor was his slight build; he weighed less than one hundred and ten pounds. And one day he persuaded a fellow convict to sew him up in one of the outgoing mattresses.

The mattresses were loaded under convict guard in layers of six. No one noticed anything unusual in the load in which Jack lay trembling. Even Keeper Victor Brown, driving the truck, had proceeded quite some distance toward the gate in the south wall when he chanced to look back at his load and thought he detected a ripple of motion there. Or were his eyes going back on him?

He decided to call on Principal Keeper Sheehy to take a look at the mattresses. And the later, running his hand over each mattress in turn, soon found the one in which the convict was imprisoned.

When the convicts at Ossining one June day lined up for their midday meal, it was found one seat was vacant. Investigation showed that Michael Miller, thirty-one years, old, of New York City, was missing. He was finishing a five-year sentence and was shortly to be transferred to another prison to begin serving a twenty-two-year sentence for a crime committed while he was out on parole.

Sentries on duty on the thirty-foot wall were positive Miller had not scaled it on his way out.

Also, every civilian worker privileged to leave at the end of the day was quickly accounted for. Miller, as had been feared, had stunned one of these men, stolen his clothes and his pass, and made his getaway disguised as this worker.

A thorough search of the prison yard and the buildings failed to get results. And it began to look as if his escape might be another mystery, when the warden got a telephone call from the concern which that very day had taken out a truck load of ash-cans made by the prisoners.

The ash-cans had been stacked one on top of the other as was customary. At the other end, on unloading, it was found that one of the cans in the top layer had no bottom. And the superintendent was making a complaint about this imperfect can.

Now it was clear how Miller had escaped. He had been able to stand up within the double ash-can!

This suspicion was verified when a man reported seeing a man climb out of an ash-can and jump from the truck as it was slowly ascending a steep grade near Tarrytown.

CAT-EYED ANNIE was responsible for many gray hairs acquired by Auburn keepers during her stays in their

(Continued on page 39)

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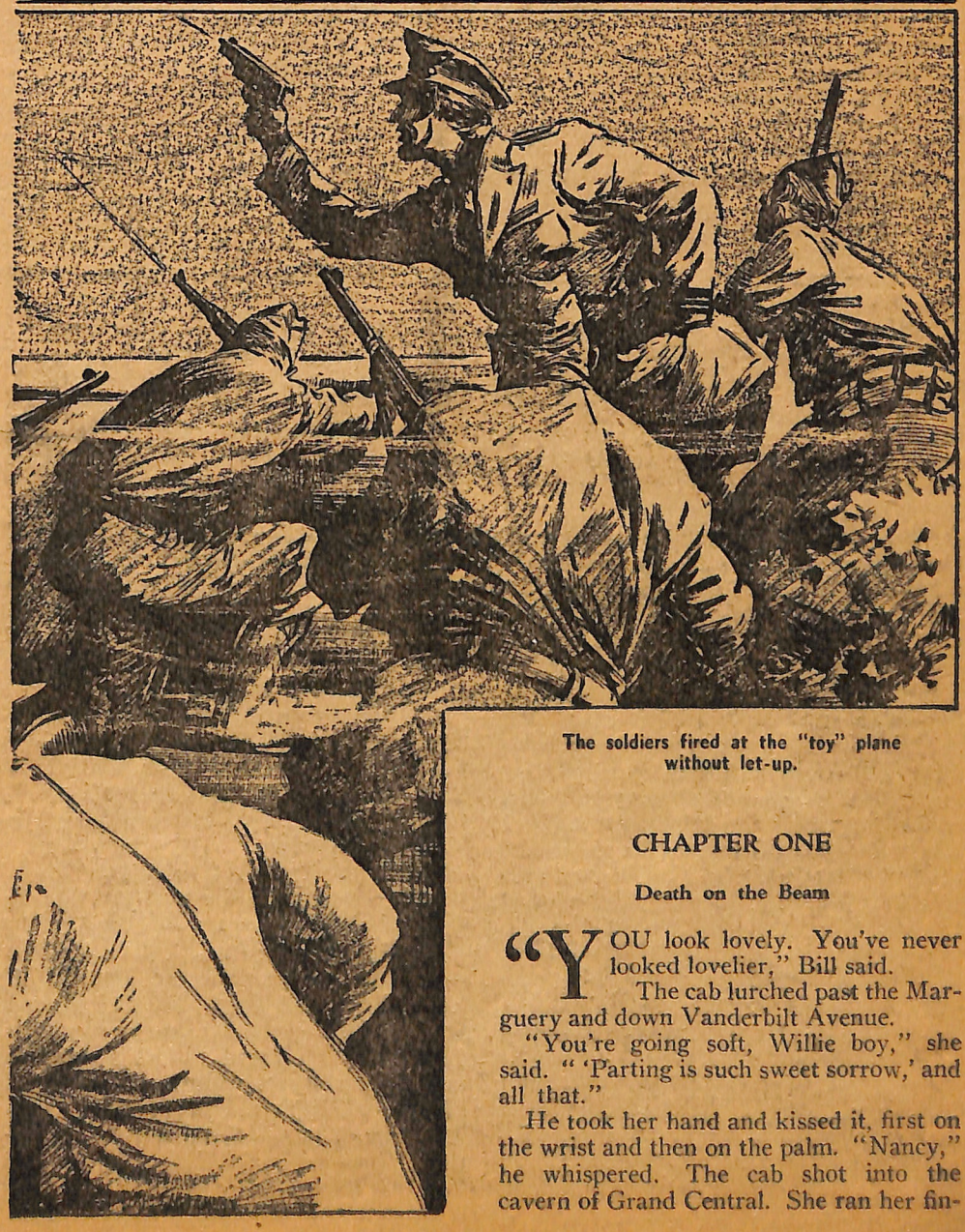
MODEL FOR MURDER

By EDWARD ANHALT



The soldiers fired at the "toy" plane without let-up.

CHAPTER ONE

Death on the Beam

"YOU look lovely. You've never looked lovelier," Bill said.

The cab lurched past the Marguery and down Vanderbilt Avenue.

"You're going soft, Willie boy," she said. " 'Parting is such sweet sorrow,' and all that."

He took her hand and kissed it, first on the wrist and then on the palm. "Nancy," he whispered. The cab shot into the cavern of Grand Central. She ran her fin-

ger over the gold bars and the little gold U.S.

"Oh, darling," she said. "It's here and I want to be brave and bright and all full of smart talk, but I can't."

"Nancy, sweet."

He kissed her. Behind them, the waiting cabs honked noisily.

The porter pulled the bags to the pavement and they followed him down the marble staircase.

"Willie, we've never been apart before. What'll we do?"

"We'll get used to it. We'll have to."

They walked through the crowd to the station platform.

The brakeman waved at them. "Better hurry up," he said.

Her face was screwed up like a child's, but she didn't cry.

"All aboard."

"Darling—Nancy!" He kissed her closed eyelids.

As the train pulled out, he watched her, standing and not waving, just slowly receding in a kind of mute appeal—small and strange in her trim WAC uniform. The train thundered into the tunnel, and she was gone. He rubbed the lipstick from his new gray flannel suit and climbed the ramp.

THE Oyster Bar in Grand Central is distinguished, among other things, for the fact that no one ever lingers in it. People are either coming or going—even the drunks are ambulatory. Bill Rigby at the moment scarcely knew whether he was coming or going, so he lingered. He lingered over five Black Labels with his big hands in the bristles of his hair where the black waves would have been had it ever been allowed to grow.

He spun the jigger glass toward the bartender. "Switch to Pinch," he said.

"I'm stone sober," he said to nobody. Inside of him, his private demon turned on a recording.

"But, darling," Nancy was saying, "it isn't as though you haven't tried to get in. You've got a silver plate in your head as big as a quarter. That doesn't make you a slacker. Besides, you're practically in the Army. You've given up a fat Hollywood contract. . . ."

"So I'm adjusted to it," he heard himself saying. "So everybody does what he can. Some guys bomb Tokio—and I write films, on military courtesy. Maybe I should wear a sign saying I was playing left tackle when the Nazis walked into Vienna and a Princeton boy kicked my head in. So it's bad enough for a six-foot-three-inch character to walk around in civilian clothes without his wife putting on a uniform in the bargain."

He frowned and switched off the record. The bartender was a friendly looking old Irishman—the kind of bartender you tell your troubles to. Only, Bill thought, how the hell can I tell him my wife just rode off on a white horse to fight the dragon while I'm left in the barn? He pulled his foot sharply from the bar rail.

"I *am* getting confused," he murmured. The bartender hovered. "Tom," he added, "see if you can get me a pot of black coffee."

He walked down the ramp to the Lexington Avenue subway and caught a downtown local. It was mid-afternoon and the train wasn't crowded, yet people bunched in the doorways so that he had to shove his way in. He stepped on somebody's toe.

"Gott!" swore the man.

Bill stared, caught by the juicy, Third-Reich intonation. Mild, blue, spectacled eyes stared back at him.

Bill murmured an apology and gazed idly around him at the car cards.

The spectacled man was pushed onto Bill's foot, only he didn't excuse himself. Instead, he spoke to his companion, in his heavy accent:

"What time shall I meet you?"

"At eight," was the answer, "at the Uj Szabadság."

Nearing 23rd Street, Bill made the customary preparations for getting off. The doors hissed open. Bill shoved, and separated the spectacled man from a long parcel which clanged to the floor. He bent down and returned it, only to lose its contents through a hole in the bottom. The doors shut. He had missed his station.

He picked up an aluminum cylinder, threaded at one end, and offered it to the man.

He began, politely, "I'm terribly—"

"Imbecile!" said the man, jerking the bar into its package.

Both the men glared at him and pushed their way to the other end of the car. Bill got off at 18th and walked back to 23rd.

THE Army Film Unit had taken over an office building on Madison Square. Bill reached it without further incident, flashed his badge, and rode up to his office. There was a note from the CO on his desk. He found him in the projection room.

Colonel Harris was a strictly G. I. officer with a tan so deep, hair so crisp and gray, and a carriage so straight that he looked as though he had been type-cast for the part. Several junior officers were present and an infantry B. G. to whom the colonel was laboriously explaining the Army film production process.

"As you know, General," he was saying, "we receive a statement of the training needs of the various services—sit down, Rigby—this is broken down into the logical learning patterns—to explain in detail. . . ."

"In any case," he concluded, "a general outline is made and goes to a scenarist like Rigby." He introduced Bill and gave him the ball.

"I see your name on the screen in the movies," said the general.

"So," said Bill, "I get the outline and chase down to the camp where the particular ordinance or operation I am to study, is located. Then I write the script, the reel is made, and officially approved. The reel I've just finished is on the operation of the radio-controlled model target plane." The colonel pushed the projectionist's button.

The picture opened with the tile "This film is confidential." Then, in a series of quick shots against music and sound effects, the five-foot model P-39 was thrown from a platform, its two-horse-power motor turning at full throttle. In twelve feet it gained flying speed and climbed rapidly to five hundred feet. It looped, dove, wheeled, did everything a full-sized plane might do.

The film then cut to an officer operating the short wave control—a box no larger than a woman's hand bag. A battery of three-inch guns, specially rigged for firing at model planes, let go with a miniature ack-ack. The officer twisted and looped the plane toward the fire, ending the maneuver with a wild dive at the gunners at full throttle from a thousand feet.

On the climb back, the guns found their mark and shot off the tail assembly. The plane went into a spin.

The officer pressed a button on the little transmitter, releasing a parachute. Simultaneously he cut the motor and the damaged plane floated gently toward the field. The music came up and out and the film simmered down to a description of the technical details of the unit.

"The short-wave control unit," said the narrator, "mounts a control stick similar in function to the conventional control stick of a full-size plane." The film cut to a close-up of the unit. "It is an eight-inch aluminum cylinder threaded at one end and affixed to a ball and socket assembly. . . ."

"Holy cow!" muttered Bill. The man in the subway, the spectacled man with the sensitive toe . . . the package he had knocked down and picked up. . . . The cylinder that had dropped out was the control stick of the short-wave unit.

I could be mistaken, Bill thought, but I doubt it.

When the picture was finished, he accepted the general's compliments, and walked back to his office.

Well, even if the man had been carrying the stick, so what? Maybe he worked in the factory that made the control box or sub-contracted for the parts. He called the research department.

"Find the name of the target plane manufacturer," he asked. "Call him and get the location of the sub-contractor who makes the aluminum control stick. I'll wait here for the information."

He gazed vacantly out of the window at the unbeautiful roofs of downtown Manhattan. He hoped something would come of the call. If the part was made in California, as he vaguely recollected, what would a Teutonic person be doing with it in New York? He had always wanted to play G-man. And this, apparently, was his chance.

He shuffled out of his mind the unescapable thought that he would rather play anyone but himself this day, and gave his imagination its head. The spies, obviously, were stealing the secret of the model target plane.

Thus, in the next few minutes, in imagination he trailed the spectacled man, caught him with the blueprints, and after a running gunfight, returned them safely to G-2. At four forty-five he rounded up the remaining members of the gang. At five o'clock he was receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor from the hands of the President, himself. Captain Nancy Rigby, loving and constrained, linked the ribbon behind his neck.

As they did it again for the newsreels, the phone rang.

Yes, the plane was manufactured in California and the aluminum small parts in Seattle. He thanked the girl and tore up the doodles he had been doing on scrap paper. Uj Szabadság, the other character had said, at eight o'clock. He pulled out the Manhattan telephone directory.

UJ SZABADSÁG turned out to be a Hungarian café in the East Seventies. It occupied the street floor of a community center belonging to an anti-Fascist Hungarian labor group. The walls were brown-paneled on top and brown imitation marble below. They were covered with war posters in Hungarian and English. Foreign language newspapers and American picture magazines were scattered over the tables.

Some of the afternoon customers were still playing cards in a corner. The shirt-sleeved waiter placed Bill at a spotlessly clean table in the rear, where he could not be seen from the door.

It was seven o'clock. He looked at the menu, which was totally incomprehensible. The waiter walked over, drying his hands on his apron.

"Beer," said Bill.

"Sär," called the waiter and came back with a huge stein full. "To eat?" he asked, wiping off the bottom.

"To eat," said Bill. "Shoot the works. Anything you say."

"Ah," said the waiter, national culinary pride asserting itself all over. "To begin with some *Töltöt Nvak."*

This turned out to be a kind of skin stuffed with highly spiced meat and onions. He ate it with considerable relish and read a picture magazine. It was seven fifteen when the second course arrived, *Csuke leves,* chicken soup with noodles. Simultaneously the café suddenly filled up—the diners beginning their meals immediately with little conversation. The Hungarian dinner hour was, evidently, a serious occasion—a fact which he came to appreciate after finishing the second appetizer, a stuffed cabbage arrangement called *Töltöt Kápószta.*

"Fröcs," said the waiter.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Rhine wine and seltzer. A national habit."

"Oh," said Bill, "bring it on."

With it came something called *Scirke Paprikas,* chicken fricassee with dumplings.

"Of course"—he caught the waiter as he turned— "you mean this for another table.

"For you," said the waiter. "On the menu. A national dish. You'll like it."

I'll like it, he thought, but the point is, will I live through it?

At seven fifty-nine the man without glasses came in. At eight, on the dot, the man with glasses joined him. They sat near the door and their conversation was inaudible.

"For dessert," the waiter stated categorically, *"Kápószta Strudel."*

"I know," said Bill, "a national dish. What is it?"

"Cabbage strudel," called the waiter over his shoulder.

The things, thought Bill, paraphrasing the remark of Henry VIII on the occasion of his sixth marriage, "The things I've done for my country!"

The waiter brought the two men beer and took their order.

Suddenly Bill missed Nancy sharply.

He nibbled and watched the taller man He was having fun but she would have made it that much better.

The strudel arrived—a mass of sheer food. "Do I pull the safety pin before I throw it," he heard himself saying to her over the table, "or do I just eat it the way it is?"

"That," he could almost hear her an-

swer, "must be the secret weapon of the Hungarian underground."

He nibbled and watched the taller man get up and buy cigarettes. As he returned to his seat, he appeared to spot Bill in the semidarkness. With almost no hesitation he walked back to his table, threw down a coin, muttered a single word, and walked toward the door. The spectacled one left his beer and followed.

Up to this point the whole thing had been more or less of a gag. Now, Bill rose quickly and looked for the waiter. A joke was a joke but these boys weren't kidding. Nobody goes to the trouble of memorizing the features of the man who knocks into you on the subway, certainly, and no ordinary person runs away when he sees him. This was definitely something special.

"Waiter," he asked, "did those men order their dinner?"

"*Igen*—most certainly yes." The waiter looked at the empty table. "What happened to them?"

"They saw something they didn't like. Do you know them?"

"Never before have I seen them. I swear it."

Bill ran to the door. They were halfway down the block and looking back. He made a quick decision. Obviously, he couldn't follow them, but maybe somebody else. . . . He looked around for someone from the other side of town. Someone who was visiting like himself.

There was a middle-aged, Bostonish-looking woman on the other side of the bar, nearly hidden from view. He had to take a chance on her. There were only a few seconds left. H sat down quickly at her table and began to speak, softly and rapidly, looking directly into her eyes.

"Look," he said, "don't get excited, don't get up. Just keep listening. My name is Bill Rigby. I work for the Army." He put his identification badge on the table. The woman started.

He laid a hand on her arm. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you, but you must help me. This is important. A few seconds ago two men walked out of here because they recognized me. I haven't time to explain why, but the men must be followed. I'd do it myself only they'd surely spot me. You're the only one in the place who looks as though she'd understand."

He scribbled his phone number on a card.

"You can see them walking toward Third Avenue if you hurry. When they light some place, call me at this number." He handed her the card.

The woman rose, wide-eyed. "Waiter!" she called.

Bill grabbed her arm. "Don't," he said. "You've got to help me."

She shook herself loose and ran to the waiter, who stood at the bar. The silent diners had all stopped eating, were watching her. "This man is annoying me," she said. "I think he's crazy."

Bill vaulted a chair and thrust a bill into the waiter's hand.

"If the gentleman had wanted to meet the lady—" the waiter began, but Bill was already out on the street, running toward Third Avenue. By the time he stopped, panting, at the corner, the men had completely disappeared. He caught a cab and headed for the 79th Street Transverse, feeling a little silly and slightly sick to his stomach. When he had done with cursing the woman, himself, and Hungarian national dishes, he settled back to the inexorable question.

What on earth would enemy agents want with a model target plane, the transmitter unit, or any part of the apparatus? Before the war he had seen German scientific journals which described this anti-aircraft training method in detail. As a matter of fact, the Nazis had been leaders in the field of experimentation with radio-controlled planes.

True, the midget Selsyn motor, which pulled the control cables on the reception of the short wave signal, was an American development but, surely, German enginers could or had developed a similar unit. Certainly, they wouldn't go to the trouble of using two stooges who fled stupidly from an unknown man because he had merely seen an eight-inch piece of aluminum.

He gave it up. If he had not dreamed up the whole thing, matters were obviously beyond the point where they could be dealt with by an amateur. He made up his mind to call Colonel Harris as soon as he got home.

THE elevator boy told him that there was a wire under the door. He opened it in the hall and saw it was from Nancy.

Darling Stop Incredible Luck Stop Not Gone Forever Stop Be Back In Business Saturday Stop Meet You Central Park Terrace Bar Five O'Clock

He went in, shut the door, picked up the phone in the foyer, and registered blank astonishment. There were two Army officers sitting in the living room.

"Rigby," one called. "Is that you? Come on in."

He dropped the phone and entered the room.

"Thanks. May I sit down?" he asked, as urbanely as as possible.

They introduced themselves. Captain Thompson, Captain Putnam, Army Intelligence.

"How did you get in?"

"A childish impulse," said Captain Putnam. "We don't get your chances at playing cops and robbers, so just to keep our hand in, we used a skeleton key."

"How did you know?" blurted Bill.

Thompson interrupted, "You tell us."

Bill looked around the room. Everything was faintly out of place, indicating a meticulous search. I've stuck my nose into something, for sure, he thought. G-2 must have been onto my guys before I butted in.

"I hope I didn't queer anything for you," he said. "I was just about to call Colonel Harris and spill the whole story to him."

Putnam lit a cigarette. "Let's hear your story."

He told them.

"Well," said Thompson, with a side glance at the other officer, "that's all we know ourselves, except the lead that a few plane units have been disappearing from the assembly plant, piece by piece."

"Mind telling us what's in the wire?" asked Putnam.

Bill uncrumpled it and handed it over. Putnam read it and passed it slowly to the other officer. Thompson folded it neatly and returned it.

"You know all about the unit, don't you, Rigby? Frequency, transmitter range, speed of the plane, and so forth?"

"Pretty much. I studied the manual for a few weeks and played with the gadget myself."

The officers rose.

"We'll call Colonel Harris," said Thompson. He looked at his watch. "Not too late to call him at home."

He asked for a Riverdale number, got his connection, and explained briefly. He replaced the phone.

"The colonel will see us tonight," he said. "Can you come along, Rigby?"

"Sure. I'd like to work with you on this, if you'll let me."

At the door Thompson stepped back.

"Better let us pick you up. If you're being tailed, we don't want to be tied up with you. Take the subway to One Hundred and Eighty-first, and we'll catch you on Riverside Drive just above the bridge. Get off at One Hundred and Eighty-sixth, and wait there on the platform for the next train, and don't get onto it until the doors are nearly shut. If anybody else does the same thing, shake him before you meet us."

"I get it."

When they were gone, Bill changed his shirt and washed quickly. Life was looking up. By the time Saturday came, he might have something to tell Nancy. Usually, when they saw each other, she told him her adventures at great length. "And what's with you, Willie?" she would ask when she was through. "Nothing," he would say, "same old thing." This Saturday, she would ask and he would say, casually, "Nothing. Same old thing. Turned in a couple of Nazis this morning."

Coming down in the elevator he felt a sudden, unreasonable urge to tell the elevator man where he was going and why. He stifled it, stepped out to the sidewalk and looked quickly around him. In the dimout he could see no further than the hundred yards to the 8th Avenue Subway kiosk. He traversed it quickly and was relieved to find that he was the only person on the uptown platform. The train came, the doors shut and no one had got on but himself.

He followed Thompson's instructions at 168th Street. At 181st he got off and descended innumerable steps to the high-

way. The George Washington Bridge loomed unbelievably big before him. It was a warm, vaguely damp, spring evening. He breathed deeply with excitement. The car drove up, not the Army sedan he had expected, but a blue, four-door convertible. He climbed into the back seat with Putnam.

"See anybody?" the officer asked.

"No. I've certain not. I jumped off quick like a rabbit at One Hundred and Eighty-sixth Street. Nobody could have followed me even if they were trying."

CHAPTER TWO

The Spectacled Man

THEY drove up the highway for a time without speaking. Thompson broke the silence.

"Rigby, how long has your wife been in the WACs?"

"Nearly a year. She was commissioned a captain last fall."

The car drew up to the toll gate just above Dyckman Street. Thompson paid.

"See her much?"

"Saw her today, as a matter of fact."

"What time did she catch her train?"

"Noon."

"Why didn't she tell you she'd be back Saturday, before she left?"

"I don't know. Probably she didn't know herself."

"What do you mean, 'probably'?" asked Thompson.

"Perhaps she knew and wanted to surprise me."

"Where was she going?" asked Putnam.

Bill looked sharply at him. In the mirror he thought he could see the last highway exit to Riverdale dropping into the darkness.

Where was his wife going? Where was he going! That was more to the point.

"Washington," he answered. "I think you've passed the Riverdale exit."

Thompson slowed the car and half turned his head.

"Her telegram arrived at five o'clock. Isn't it a little strange that she should

wire you so soon after leaving, about when she would be back?"

The car sped past Van Cortlandt Park. They were unmistakably past Riverdale. Bill had the same inexplicable sensation that had almost prompted him to tell the elevator boy his destination.

"It's a long way back to Riverdale," he said, for lack of anything else.

"Longer than you think," said Putnam. There was a strained note in his voice. He flicked ashes from his uniform and ground out his cigarette in the tray.

"I don't get it," said Bill. "I'm on your side, remember? Why the third degree about the telegram? What has it got to do with anything?"

"You don't seriously expect us to believe that the wire is from your wife?"

"I expect anything from now on." Apparently G-2, like God, moved in mysterious ways. "Who else would have sent it?"

"That," said Putnam, "is a question you are going to answer." With a single motion, he drew a forty-five from his blouse, cocked the barrel, and pointed it. Placing his foot against Bill's thigh, he pushed viciously so that Bill slid across the leather seat into the corner.

"You're getting my suit dirty," Bill said. He tried to think, but nothing would come. He was a complete blank. He only knew he wanted to throw himself from the moving car and run.

Thompson drove on.

Putnam pressed firmly with his foot, locking Bill against the seat. "Who sent it?"

He knew now what he had felt in the elevator. Next time he would ride a hunch instead of ignoring it. Next time. Next time. He stared at the forty-five, his throat full of an awful surmise. He wet his lips.

"I demand," he said slowly, "to see your A. G. O. card and your G-2 identification."

The car reached the Cross County Parkway. Putnam kicked viciously.

"You want to see mine. You stupid fool, we want to see yours." He moved forward. "Clasp your hands behind your head."

Thompson tilted the mirror so that he could watch the search.

"So," said Putnam, "you don't carry it. At least you're that smart." He relaxed the pressure of his foot. "Do you Americans seriously believe you can stick your noses into our plans and get away with it?"

So that's it, thought Bill, knowing suddenly what he had suspected for some minutes past.

"You must have been here a long time to speak English that well," he said.

"I've been here all my life. There are greater loyalties than loyalty to the geographical area in which one happens to have been born."

Bill watched the road speed by, eyed the gun. He was stuck, there was no doubt about it. "I could argue the point with you," he said, "but I doubt if you'd understand."

They were nearing the Hutchinson Parkway now.

"What do you intend to do with me?" he asked.

He could see Thompson smile grimly in the mirror.

Putnam said nothing, but looked down at the gun.

"Look," he said. "You're making a mistake. I am not in Military Intelligence. All I know is that my wife wired me that she's coming home Saturday, and a man with glasses has an eight-inch piece of aluminum that is part of a model target plane unit that every schoolboy in the country knows about. Is that enough to kill for?"

"Shut up," said Thompson.

"Stop squealing," Putnam added. "You know enough. Let it go at that. You democrats are soft. You should learn how to die."

THEY drove on in silence. They turned on to the Hutchinson.

"For the last time," said Putnam, "who sent that wire?"

"For the last time," Bill answered wearily, "my wife sent it."

Putnam lowered his gun a trifle.

"Listen," he said, "all we have to do is telephone our people about that wire and they'll start to trace it. It won't be very difficult. But I don't like making telephone calls about important business. I'll make a deal with you—" He stiffened

his gun arm again and fixed his eyes on Bill. "You can live if you tell us the name of the person who sent the wire."

"Okay, I'll tell you," said Bill. At their eagerness, he paused and grinned. "My wife sent it."

Putnam sank back in his seat. "To hell with him," he said. "Drive faster."

Bill sweated, he felt abnormally hungry and his hands were dry and hot, as they'd been on his first plane ride.

He hoped Nancy would never find out her wire had been the cause of his— He shivered a little and felt unheroic. Even though he was helpless, he knew he should be more curious about the model plane, but the problem was academic. There was a certain satisfaction in knowing that now twenty enemy agents would tear madly around Washington only to find Captain Nancy Rigby and her unexpected leave. But not very much satisfaction. He was going to die.

His thoughts ran back to Nancy. He felt badly for all the things they'd done and could have done together. He remembered particularly one spring morning on Fifth Avenue, just before the dawn—and the time they had come home, very high, in the subway, riding with the motorman in his cab.

His captors turned off at Larchmont, rode toward the town, and then pulled in on a dirt road behind a barn.

Thompson came around the back of the car and opened the door.

"Out," said Putnam.

As he got out, he wanted to do something, anything, but he could only feel the gun at his back and suck in his breath at the thought of the big slug crashing into him. He was alive still, and would not hasten the end by his own hand.

They came to an old elm. Wordlessly, Thompson pushed him sharply against the trunk. As he fell, he saw Putnam's gun arm stiffen and took a last bitter chance.

He threw his arms out and with a tremendous, inhuman wrench of his two-hundred-pound body, regained his balance and pulled Putnam toward him. The gun barrel landed squarely in his belly, as Thompson struck a smashing blow behind his ear with a fist. An instant later Putnam regained the trigger—but too late. The impact had forced the barrel back to three-quarter cocked position and safetied the weapon.

Bill kicked viciously. Putnam doubled over. Thompson threw his full weight on Bill's back, tearing at his eyes. Bill turned and dropped straight to the ground with all the force he could command. Thompson hit hard and Bill was up first. He found the gun, cocked it, and fired twice. The slugs jerked Thompson into the air. As Putnam rose, Bill caught him at the throat with the gun butt, and again on the temple. Then he leaned against the tree, sobbing, and wiping the blood from his ear.

He stayed that way an immeasurable length of time. When he felt better he began to search their clothing, pulling the bodies into a moonlit clearing. A shadow, the crunching of gravel, something, made him look up. In moonlight, he saw something running. It reached the road and he saw that it was a woman.

"Hey," he called.

She kept on running.

She had probably heard the shots and seen him with the bodies. She would call the police, and when they arrived they might shoot first and ask questions later.

Furthermore, he, a civilian, had killed one and possibly two Army officers in cold blood. It might be quite a while before he could explain.

The watch on Thompson's limp wrist told him it was eleven-thirty. If he were picked up, the story would break the morning papers, tip off the rest of the Nazi gang, cause any number of complications.

He pocketed the gun, took the car key out of Thompson's pocket, and headed the car back toward Riverdale and Colonel Harris.

As he pulled onto the highway, he could see the red lights of the police cars turning in behind the barn.

"This," he said to himself, "is what is known as 'leaving the scene of the crime.'"

BILL finished the story and his drink simultaneously. Mrs. Harris poured another.

"Is the bandage all right?" she asked.

He felt his ear and assured her that it was. The colonel cleared his throat.

"Rigby, in my forty years of military experience, I have never heard a story like this. If I hadn't reasonable personal knowledge of your sanity, I'd say you made the thing up out of whole cloth."

Bill pointed to his ear, and grinned. "I didn't make this up."

"Where exactly did you leave the—ah—bodies?"

"About a quarter of a mile east of the Hutchinson."

"Are you sure the police didn't catch your license number? It wouldn't do to have the car traced here, you know."

"Perfectly in the clear," said Bill. "I was on the Parkway when they got to the barn. I was just another car on the Hutchinson so far as they were concerned."

"Well," said the colonel, "you did the right thing by not waiting for the police. As senior G-2 officer at the Post, I'll take the responsibility of having you in my custody until we hear through channels that Thompson and Putnam were impostors. I'd like to stop the news from hitting the papers, but it's probably too late by this time. We could stop it officially, of course, but it would leak out."

"What about my wife and the telegram?"

"From what you've told me, they obviously thought the wire was sent by somebody as a coded message concerning whatever they're going to do with the plane unit or the rest of the apparatus. She's not involved with it in their minds, so I wouldn't worry about her. In any case, nobody knew about the wire except Thompson and Putnam, and"—he smiled slightly— "you seem to have taken care of them. Give me the gun," he added.

"Don't you trust me, either, sir?" asked Bill.

"Come on, come on. Do as I say. We're in something bigger than you realize, and we haven't the time to be concerned about anybody's feelings. This is a big job or they wouldn't have had enough men covering their operations to spot you in the first place."

They drove over the Henry Hudson Bridge and down the highway in the colonel's car. He spoke only twice, once to assure Bill that he had no more idea of their motive than Bill himself, and once to pray profanely that Putnam remained alive for questioning.

By one a.m. the colonel had rounded up a G-2 major and lieutenant, a deputy police commissioner, and several F.B.I. men. Seated comfortably in the cool ocean breeze that ran through the colonel's South Ferry office, Bill felt sleep creeping over him. He smoked and forced himself to stay awake as he heard the details of his story over and over again.

"Let's not take any chance on the time element in this thing," the colonel had said. Consequently, since they had arrived, many people, from the parts factory in Oregon to the employees of the Café Uj Szabadság were being rounded out of bed and questioned. At F.B.I. headquarters, clerks were busy looking up the histories of anybody remotely concerned—from Captain Nancy Rigby to Bill's elevator man. Two Army men had been dispatched to Westchester to get at Putnam.

By three o'clock the reports were all in. Lingle, the F.B.I. chief, summarized them to the group:

"The factory reports no parts missing," he said. "That indicates they were sneaked out, piece by piece, over a long period of time."

"If they *were* sneaked out," interrupted the colonel. "Remember, the only part we know for certain is outside the plant is the control stick that Rigby saw in the subway."

"Okay," Lingle continued. "*If*. We can't have a double-check on all the plant employees for twenty-four hours, so that part of it will have to keep. Neither the waiter nor the restaurant owner have ever seen the man with the spectacles or his friend, before, and the lady who thought Rigby was trying to date her was a stranger too. We've talked to every customer that the owner could remember was in the café at the time and nobody had ever seen anybody before. On a hunch, we even got the driver that picked up Rigby on Seventy-third, and he doesn't even remember Rigby!" He grinned in disgust. The phone rang.

"It's for you, Commissioner," said the lieutenant.

"Yes," the commissioner said. He said "yes" some six times, and then hung up.

"Thompson died instantly and Putnam is still unconscious and probably won't wake up. They didn't get the license number of the car and the tip-off came from the woman who owned the barn. She just came up to open the place for the summer and heard the shots."

He turned to Colonel Harris. "Your men identified Thompson and Putnam as west coast officers on leave, as instructed, and said they'd been robbed of their identification and money. All the papers will get is a story of straight robbery and killing, with no names mentioned."

The colonel stood up and shook his head at Bill. "All right, Rigby, that puts you in the clear for a while, anyway. You'd better go home and get some sleep."

This is the brush-off, thought Bill. He would like to have stayed on to the end of the line but, apparently, his usefulness was ended.

Lingle extended his hand, and shook his head reproachfully.

"You were a sucker for going with Thompson and Putnam and you should have got wise the minute you realized they thought your wife's wire was code. However, we wouldn't know even the little we do if you hadn't kept your eyes open in the first place. Thanks," he concluded. "And don't worry about the shooting. It's just one less rat to worry about."

The colonel showed Bill to the door. "Have you got a gun?" he asked.

"Only a thirty-thirty that I use for deer."

"Well, keep it handy and better stay home until we call you." He smiled. "Don't go out with any more men in uniform."

As Bill left, he could hear Lingle's drawl. "We don't know why. . . . What's going on, where it's going on, or even if anything *is* going on at all. I don't see what. . . ." The voice trailed off as Bill closed the outer door and rang for the night elevator.

There was no cab on lower Broadway, so he walked past the Governor's Island Ferry. He caught a cab there and only realized how completely exhausted he was when he hit the seat. He was so tired that he couldn't remember the drive home, and he fell into a deep sleep the moment he hit the bed.

THE morning paper was under the door at noon when he awakened. Bill read it over his coffee. The story had been given a full column. Putnam had died during the night. "It is believed," the news article concluded sagely, "that the officers were lured to their death by a woman operating with a gang of criminals who have been preying on Servicemen."

He took a second cup of coffee, showered, and then asked the elevator boy to get him an afternoon paper. When the boy got back, he opened it quickly. The story had been carried over. There were no new developments, so there was a picture of the woman who had called the police and a two-column caption, "Socialite Who Saw Killer."

He looked at the picture and then jerked his arm suddenly, upsetting the coffee. The woman in the picture was the woman he had appealed to in the café.

The colonel was not at G-2, nor had the Film Unit heard from him all day. He left his number and tried Lingle. The girl at the F.B.I. wouldn't tell him where he was, but she said she would have Lingle call him when he phoned in. The commissioner's office was no more informative, nor the police sergeant.

Bill looked at the picture again. It had been taken when the woman was much younger, but it was unquestionably the same woman. They took me up there, he reasoned, because she owned the place and it would be safe for the killing. Afterward, she probably figured in their plans to get rid of the body. When she heard the shots and saw me still standing, she called the police. She assumed I'd tell them anyway and this would serve to tie me up on a murder charge for a few hours, or maybe a few days. Only, she didn't figure on the papers having an old portrait of her. He snapped the paper shut. They must be badly pressed for time, he thought, or else she wouldn't have taken a chance like that.

He tried the colonel again, then Lingle, and finally the commissioner, without success.

"I'll have him call you when he comes in," the sergeant said.

The other two officers had told him the same thing.

"You're becoming a dull conversationalist," he told the sergeant, and reached a decision. If time was as important as "Socialite Who Saw Killer" thought, it was important enough to act quickly, alone if necessary.

He climbed into his clothes, loaded the .30-30, and feeling slightly silly, rode down in the elevator with it.

"Hold your hats, boys," he muttered. "Here we go again."

"Mr. Rigby," asked the colored boy, "where is you goin' with that cannon?"

"Sam," Bill replied, "forget the elevator and go sit in my apartment until the phone rings. When it does, tell whoever calls to get to the Larchmont Police Station as fast as possible and wait for me there."

There was a cab on the corner. He ran to it, got in and slammed the door.

"Larchmont, driver, as quick as you can."

The driver reached back and opened the door. "Out," he said. "Get out."

Bill protested.

"Listen," said the driver, "for fifteen cents the first quarter of a mile and five cents for the next quarter or any fraction thereof, I am not participating in any B picture. If you wanna ride with me, you're gonna have to dump that blunderbuss."

"Okay," said Bill, deciding that the rifle was a bad idea, anyway. Sam had followed him to the cab. He handed him the gun. "It's loaded, Sam. Don't point it at any of the tenants, and don't forget—the Larchmont police station."

"Is that where you're going?" asked the driver.

"No, drive up the Hutchinson. I'll show you where."

They drove halfway up it in silence. Then the driver turned around.

"Funny things happen to a cabbie," he said. "I had a guy jump in once with a gun and tell me to drive to Westfield, Connecticut. 'Listen' I says, 'what do you wanna go to Westfield, Connecticut, in a cab for? It's cheaper by train.' 'I'm gonna kill my wife' says this guy, just as cool, 'and nothing is too good.' 'Whaddya wanna kill your wife in Connecticut for?' I says. 'In New York the murder laws is much less strict. Why don't you ask her to come down here and then kill her?' 'You got somethin' there,' says this character. 'I'll consider it.'"

"What happened?" Bill asked.

"Oh, nuthin'. The guy wasn't even married. He was nuts."

"Oh," said Bill.

WHEN they got to the Larchmont road, Bill could see the barn from the highway. The road crossed the Hutchinson over a stone bridge. He had the cab pull onto the grass shoulder, hidden from view beneath the bridge. The driver cut the switch.

"I don't intend to keep the motor running for a getaway," he said meticulously.

"What makes you think anything about a getaway?"

The driver shrugged his shoulders. "It's obvious."

"Kidding aside, this is a serious business. I'll want you to get me to the police station, fast, when I get back."

"Don't apologize," replied the driver. "This is a public conveyance. What you do outside of it is no concern of mine, whatsoever."

Bill climbed up the highway embankment and into the field adjacent to the barn. The brambles caught his tweed jacket as he crawled, soldier fashion, through the grass. Going under the barbed wire behind the barn, he snagged the bandage over his ear. It came off but the wound did not bleed.

He caught sight of the house, a stone Victorian-Gothic affair, two hundred yards or so farther on. Painfully, he made his way through the brush, creeping parallel to the gravel pathway. As he pulled himself to the side of the octagon-shaped porch that ran completely around the house, he heard footsteps.

A man strode around the corner, walking from the back of the house. He was a typical bully boy, the type, thought Bill, one could see before the war in South Jersey bars. He was almost bald and, despite his girth, stepped lightly on the wooden flooring.

South German, thought Bill. The man had passed and would indubitably return on his circular tour of duty. That he was a sentry, and that Bill's own suspicion regarding the part played by the woman pictured in the afternoon paper was justified, he had little further doubt.

He vaulted the porch rail and, crawling against the gray walls of the house, tiptoed to the front door. It swung open noiselessly. Inside, the Victorian motif had been skillfully exploited in somber browns and maroon. The furnishings of the rooms had been chosen with considerable care and expense.

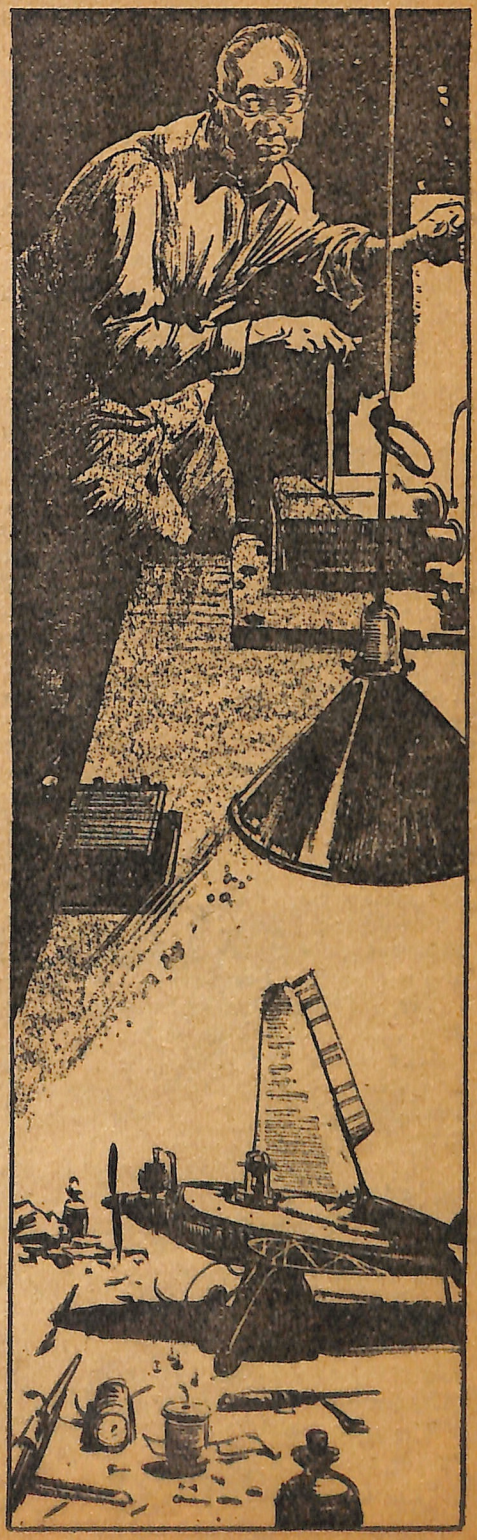
The kitchen, however, was brightly modern. He stood next to the refrigerator and listened to the sharp crack of a hammer coming from directly beneath. Outside the kitchen windows, the guard ambled slowly by.

Bill found the door to the basement and stepped softly down the stairs. Halfway down, he lay on his stomach, head forward down the stairs, so as not to expose his feet to whoever was in the cellar. The hammering stopped and he could hear the hiss of a soldering iron. He got an eye below the basement ceiling and took a long look.

There was a big work bench. Strewed out over it were the parts of the P-39 model target plane. The fuselage was intact and the miniature three-cylinder motor was mounted. The little parachute that was used to float the plane down when it was damaged, lay on the floor.

A short man in a dark blue shirt caught some lead on a soldering iron. Bill saw only his back. He turned and held the iron before him as he bent to apply it to the plane. His thick glasses, which had been perked on his forehead, slipped to his nose. It was the man with the control stick in the subway, the spectacled man.

Rigid, Bill watched him. The wires which received the solder were affixed to the parachute release with great care. Only, the parachute was not there. In its place was a standard detonator cap—the kind used in setting off nitro.



It was the spectacled man whom Bill had seen with the control stick, in the subway!

When the wires had been attached, the man joined one wing to the fuselage, pushed the spectacles back onto his forehead, and drew the transmitter unit from beneath the bench. The aluminum control stick came from a drawer. When he had attached it, he carried the box to the far end of the work bench, and pulled back on the stick. The elevators tilted upward. As the stick went forward and to the left, the elevators tilted down and the right wing ailerons up.

Bill backed up the stairs, pushing with his hands and lifting his toes so as not to catch his feet on the steps. In the kitchen, he waited for the porch walker to get to the window. As he passed it, he ran out of the room and across the long hall to the front door.

He pulled it open and, as he stepped across the sill, ran full tilt into the woman, herself. They both started back.

"I beg your pardon," he said absently and took a step forward. Then he jerked his head back and stared.

She opened her mouth to scream. His left caught her flush on the point of the jaw as the first startled sound came from her throat. She crashed against the door. Instantly, he heard the footsteps pounding around the porch. He cleared the steps in a single leap and ran madly across the lawn and over the gravel path. As he dove into the bushes, he turned and caught a flash of the guard shooting. Running through the tall grass, his heart in his throat, he heard several more shots.

He slid down the embankment to the taxi. "Get going!" he yelled.

The driver pulled off the slope and hesitated on the south-bound side of the road. "Which way?" he asked over the roar of the motor.

The gunman appeared on the stone bridge and fired once. The slug pinged against the cab, came through beneath the front seat and rolled on the floor.

"*Any* way," said the driver, answering his own question. The cab sped down the road.

"Get off at the next exit and take the road over to Larchmont," Bill shouted. "Get me to the police station."

The driver turned. "Are you a good guy or a bad guy?"

"I'm a good guy. This is all for your uncle with the white beard. I work for the Army."

"That's what I figured. I don't want you to think I have no moral sense," added the cabbie. "I wouldn't do this for anybody, sight unseen, unless I was sure they was absolutely kosher."

"Look out," said Bill. They had nearly hit a tree, in turning off the road.

"Relax," the cabbie advised, and pushed the accelerator down to the floor.

CHAPTER THREE

Wings of the Damned

BILL tried to slow himself down, to think clearly. The detonator had obviously been installed to set off an explosive that would be placed in the plane. Obviously the miniature P-39 was being used to blow up an objective by remote control. It was a flying torpedo guided by short wave.

He started, remembering the destruction of the German dams by the R.A.F. Kensico Dam? All of Westchester under a wall of water? Thousands of people drowned? But no, nobody but Buck Rogers had a powerful enough explosive to do that kind of a job, considering the quantity the five-foot plane could carry. No, whatever it was, was comfortably small, but nevertheless terribly important. The organization of the ring and their desperation proved that. He hoped the colonel or Lingle would be at the police station when they got there.

The brakes slammed on and the car lurched from one side of the road to the other as it skidded to a stop.

"You may be a good guy," said the driver. "But these guys don't know about it yet. Look."

Bill looked. Three green and white cars blocked the road. Both doors of the cab opened at once. Two motorcycle police covered him with tommy guns.

"Well," said the driver, affably, "we were just coming to see you."

"Shut up, you."

Other policemen surrounded the cab. Bill came out, his hands over his head.

"You've got to get me to the Larchmont Police Station, as soon as possible."

A Ford coupé drove up.

"You're on your way, bud," a sergeant said.

A young man in a gray flannel suit jumped out of the Ford. The sergeant saluted him.

"Do any talking?" he asked.

"Not a thing," the sergeant answered. "We just got here." He turned to Bill. "What's your name? This is the D.A."

"William Rigby. Let's get going."

"Take your time," the D.A. said. "You're charged with the murder of Captains Putnam and Thompson. Want to say anything?"

"I'll make a deal with you. If you'll drive me back to the woman who tipped you that I was back and pick up everybody and everything you find in the house, I'll confess to the murder."

"What's in the house?"

"A radio-controlled model airplane that they're rigging as an aerial torpedo—and I don't think it will be there long."

"He's nuts," said the sergeant. "He—"

The D.A. interrupted him. "Know where she lives, sergeant?"

The sergeant knew.

"Then get going. Hold anybody you find." He turned to Bill. "I'm taking a chance on you, but I want some insurance." He took a pad from his pocket. "Write your confession here."

The sergeant and two of the police cars tore off toward the house.

Bill wrote:

> On Friday evening, August 21st, acting in self-defense, I shot and/or clubbed to death two Axis agents known as Thompson and Putnam. I used a forty-five-caliber automatic belonging to Putnam.

He signed it, and flipped it to the D.A.

"I don't want to be corny, but this is a matter of life and death. There's no time to explain, but by the time we get back to the Station, Colonel Harris of G-2 will explain it to you."

"Will he explain it to me, too?" asked the cabbie. He lifted his wrists. They were manacled together.

A cop prodded him into the remaining police car.

Bill got into the D.A.'s car and they drove off with a policeman standing on the runningboard.

They turned off the side road at the barn and bounced over the gravel. When the D.A. stepped out, the sergeant had already scattered his men around the house and was striding toward the front door. It was locked and, after knocking briefly, he turned to the D.A. for instructions.

"Break it down," called the cab driver.

"Go ahead." The district attorney nodded. "We'll get the search warrant later."

The cabbie waved his arms at Bill. "How do you like this? You're the murderer and they got me tied up."

Two men crashed against the door. It gave, and they stepped inside. The sergeant drew his pistol.

"Tell him to try the basement first," Bill said.

"Rigby says to try the basement first," the D.A. shouted.

"Rigby says!" The sergeant was annoyed. "The guy's just confessed to a double murder and now *he* says." He kicked at the door. "Come on, this is a stall."

They charged through the house and through the kitchen to the basement steps.

One of the cops hesitated. "Take it easy, Sergeant. Maybe the guy is giving it to us straight."

"Shut up." He walked down seven steps. There were two shots. The sergeant sat down heavily on the stairs, holding his shoulder. The others pulled him back. He was purple with rage and pain.

"Gimme the tommy gun."

Someone passed the gun. The sergeant placed it beneath the basement ceiling and pulled the trigger. The gun shook, and spat cartridges. He weaved it from side to side, spraying the room. When the clip was exhausted, they followed him down the stairs.

Outside, the sound of the shots chattered over the trees.

The D.A. sighed.

"Why can't we ever get anybody alive in this case? First Thompson, then Putnam, then whoever is getting the wrong end of that." He eyed Bill. "You're not in the clear yet, Rigby, but it's in your favor. G-2's attitude toward Putnam and Thompson convinced me there was more to this case than plain robbery and murder."

THE police came down the porch steps carrying a body. The sergeant followed, his arm trailing uselessly at his side.

"Are you hurt much, Sergeant?" the D.A. asked.

"Just a flesh wound. It's my own fault —I walked into it."

The D.A. patted him on the back. "Is he dead?"

The body had been deposited on the lawn.

"Good and dead."

"Know him, Rigby?"

It was the man with the spectacles. "He's one of them," Bill answered. "Find anybody else?"

The sergeant shook his head. "Not a thing outside of the furniture and the rugs."

"Drive him to the hospital," the D.A. ordered.

"I'd turn in an alarm," Bill suggested. "There were two others, including the woman, and the plane unit. They were here fifteen minutes ago. I don't see their car."

The alarm went out over the two-way radio in the sergeant's car as it pulled out.

"I don't think we'll have any luck stopping them," the D.A. said.

"Look," the cab driver interrupted, "will somebody please take these handcuffs off?"

One of the cops grinned and pointed to the car turning onto the parkway toward the hospital. "The sergeant has the key," he said.

The colonel and Lingle were waiting at police headquarters. The colonel waved at the D.A.

"Thanks, Sylvester. I spoke to the sergeant before he went to the hospital. A less imaginative man would have hauled Rigby off without investigating further."

"Thanks." Sylvester smiled. "But I didn't let my imagination run away with me until I'd covered myself."

"He's got my confession," added Bill.

"You do this killing, too?" Lingle asked.

"I don't always do the killing. The sergeant knocked this one off."

They left Sylvester and walked outside to Lingle's big Buick.

"I thought we told you to stay home," Lingle said.

Bill showed him the picture of the woman. "I didn't think I should wait, under the circumstances," he explained. He turned to the colonel. "Do you think they'll stop now that they know we're after them?"

Lingle bit the end of his cigar. "Stop what?"

"You've got me, there."

"Go ahead," said the colonel. "Tell him—he might as well ride with us from now on."

Bill smiled inwardly. This is quite an achievement, he thought. I feel like the day I passed the Woodsman test in the Boy Scouts.

"Okay," said Lingle. "This is the way we're playing it. Whatever is going to happen, is going to happen soon—today or tomorrow or Monday."

He patted the newspaper picture.

"Mata Hari would never have tipped the police the second time if she hadn't needed the delay that would have resulted if Sylvester hadn't been smart enough to believe your story. Last night, she never would have tried to hang the murder on you for the few hours that it would have taken you to get out of it, if time wasn't precious to them." He lit his cigar. "So much for the time element. . ."

"As for the plane," the colonel said, "after you left last night, we deduced that the only conceivable use for the plane would be as a kind of flying bomb. Even before we heard your story, we knew that the idea was to load it with nitro and dive it precisely on the objective—the pilot seated comfortably at the control stick a quarter of a mile away, all the while."

"But the objective," asked Bill anxiously. "What's the objective?"

"That's where we're stumped. It could be anything or any place from here to the coast, in Canada or Mexico, if we assume that the thing is big enough to warrant an extensive job."

"I'd say," Bill offered, "that the objective was something comparatively small—a plane with important passengers, a vital piece of equipment, an outside office where a conference was being held, a public gathering where there would

be tremendous loss of life through panic. . ."

Lingle spoke up. "We've got every possible means of transportation bottled up. The colonel has hundreds of M.P.'s on the trains and on the roads. We've even got men checking the baggage of military passengers on Army air transports. If it's humanly possible, we'll stop the thing before it happens."

The carrier wave light on the Buick's two-way radio went on. Lingle picked up the phone and penciled a list on the pad hooked to the dashboard. He hung up and handed it to the colonel.

"The last part of a list of every important event that's taking place in the country during the next week," Colonel Harris explained. "For example, today: Radar equipment of a specially designed type for the port of Murmansk, to be loaded at nine a.m., Pier 4."

He checked the item. "Obviously, a worthwhile objective," he said, "but not the target since it's already ten miles out of Sandy Hook. Test flight of a new twin-engined, plywood bomber outside Paterson, New Jersey, at noon. Nothing happened there."

He ran a finger down the list, and read aloud:

"Pan-American Day at the Mall in Central Park. One million people of Spanish descent will hear the presidents of South American and Central American countries. Ceremonies at five p.m., Saturday."

Five p.m., thought Bill. Five p.m., Saturday. Holy Moses! He sat bolt upright, so that his head just missed the top of the car. He fumbled in the pocket of his coat for the telegram.

"I completely forgot," he said. "I have to meet my wife at the Terrace Bar on Central Park West at five p.m." He looked at his watch. "It's four-thirty now."

"Oh," said Lingle, indicating Nancy's telegram. "That's the wire that Thompson thought was code. It nearly got you killed."

"Yes," said the colonel, "if we succeed in breaking this case, your wife can take part of the credit. If she hadn't sent that wire the whole thing wouldn't have opened up."

"Too bad," said Bill, "you don't have experts who can translate perfectly innocent messages into the codes spies think they're written in. Sort of cryptography in reverse."

"YOU could make a code out of almost any perfectly straight message," said Lingle, his professional instincts aroused, "but anyone who knew anything about code would never be able to make anything out of this telegram." He tapped it with his index finger and then stayed that way, poised and rigid.

"Anybody," repeated the colonel carefully, "who knew anything about code would never be able to make anything out of the telegram." He stopped. "Judas!" He gulped the air in his excitement.

"That's it!" Lingle almost screamed.

The colonel tore the wire from Bill's hands. He read:

"Darling, stop, incredible luck, stop, not gone forever, stop, be back in business Saturday, stop, meet you Central Park Terrace Bar, five p.m."

"That's what?" Bill gaped.

The colonel was unprecedentedly aroused. "Don't you see, Rigby," he yelled. "Thompson and Putnam never thought the wire was code—they took it absolutely straight. Whatever is going to happen is set for five p.m. today at the Terrace Bar. They naturally supposed the wire was the tip off on the whole plan."

Lingle already had the big Buick thundering through the quiet streets before he had finished. The thin suburban traffic retreated before the siren.

The colonel looked at his watch. "Four forty-five." He winced.

Lingle guided the speeding car on to the Hutchinson with one hand, and with the other he gave the colonel the phone. He released the two-way switch on the dashboard.

"Arthur, Harry, Bernie, Sam," he called over his shoulder to the colonel.

"Arthur, Harry, Bernie, Sam," the colonel repeated.

"Two hundred seventy-seven, Morton, Henry, Ernie, Tom, three hundred twenty-four," Lingle continued.

The colonel repeated. He cupped his hands over the mouthpiece. "How do I tell them to send some of my own men?"

"To hell with the code," Lingle exploded. "Just tell him. They're not going to stop now, even if they know we're wise."

They were hitting eighty-five now. The colonel named the men he wanted.

Lingle gripped the wheel and spoke without taking his eyes from the flying road. "The target must be the Pan-American meeting on the Mall and they must intend to launch the plane from the terrace outside the bar.

Bill whistled slowly. "They're ambitious, these boys. They'd get practically every big shot, pro-Allied South American diplomat. It would kill the whole good neighbor policy in one blast." He looked at his own watch.

"We've got to stop it," he said, half to himself. "We've simply got to stop it."

"Take the wheel, Rigby," called Lingle, "and let me at the phone."

Bill held the wheel from over Lingle's shoulder and then slid over to the front seat as Lingle moved his body over. He held his foot to the floor boards, never slackening speed. He heard Lingle directing men to the Mall, asking for police reinforcements, and transmitting the colonel's orders to the M.P.'s to fire at the P-39. He could hear nothing as they moved over the Henry Hudson Bridge and past the open-mouthed toll guards to Manhattan.

"Tune in on the broadcast frequencies," he heard the colonel saying as they sped past the Washington Bridge. "Let's hear the thing over the radio."

Lingle switched the band and cut in on an announcement.

"Due to technical circumstances beyond our control, the transmission of the Pan-American Day program scheduled to be heard at this time will be delayed. Meanwhile, we present—"

Lingle cut back to the short-wave band.

"That would happen, too," he murmured.

Bill watched the accelerator climb to ninety-five on the long slope down the Highway.

Nancy, he kept thinking, don't let anything happen to Nancy.

NANCY RIGBY stepped out onto the shaded flagstone of the Terrace Club. The headwaiter bowed.

"Yes, Captain?"

"Table for two. I'm expecting my husband."

He sat her at the corner of the roof, overlooking the park. She ordered Black Label and squinted through the afternoon sun at the Mall. It, and the meadow about it, were completely obscured by an enormous number of people. Above them, like a hive among bees, towered the huge concrete shell of the bandstand. Occasionally, the sound of music came to her over the faint afternoon breeze.

She heard this and then a jangle of metal, much closer. She looked down. On the floor below, a man in shirt sleeves balanced a model airplane on the window sill. With quick, deft fingers, he tightened a copper wire.

Nancy looked up and started in her seat. Facing her were two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, wearing the sphinx insignia of Military Intelligence. They crooked tommy guns under their arms.

"Captain Rigby?" one asked.

She nodded.

"Your husband told us you'd be here."

The other looked at his watch. "See anything unusual around, Captain?"

She stared at their guns. "Nothing, Captain, outside of yourselves." She indicated the vacant chair. "Won't you sit down?"

There was a buzz of conversation from the other people on the terrace. The lieutenant faced them, pointing the tommy gun.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "this is an emergency. There is no cause for alarm, but will you all walk over quietly to the far side of the roof?"

The elevator door opened and a platoon of M.P.'s stepped out. Each had an automatic rifle.

"Yes, sir?" said the sergeant.

"Take four men and round up everybody in the kitchen," the lieutenant ordered.

Nancy stood up. "What on earth—" she began. "Where is my husband?"

There was a muffled explosion and then the tinny roar of a small motor. The captain jumped.

"Only a toy airplane—" she said, but he had already rushed past her, upsetting the table.

She looked down in time to see the plane dive steadily and then pull up in a climb.

The officers leaned their guns on the edge of the roof and fired at it steadily.

Nancy sank back into her chair. In back of her, at the sound of the shots, an elderly woman fainted. The soldiers fired without let-up until the plane had become a speck in the sky over the park.

LINGLE and the colonel sat forward grimly in their seats as Bill kept the hurtling Buick on the turn into the park by main force. They thundered to a stop before a group of soldiers with Garands poised expectantly at the sky. Bill cut the siren. Two of Lingle's men jumped on the running-board. One pointed past the railing on the side of the bridle path.

"Short cut," he yelled. "Across the meadow."

Bill ground the still speeding motor into low, cleared the bridle path, and crashed through the metal railing onto the grass.

The G-men clung to the windows as they tore across the field, hit the gravel path behind the band shell, and side-skidded to a stop perilously close to a group of gaping musicians.

"Thank God," said Lingle, "nothing's happened yet."

The five men edged their way through the wings to the platform behind the podium. His back to them, a heavy-set man in a frock coat spoke in Spanish. His words, amplified a hundred times, seemed to fly over the heads of the thousands of people Bill could see stretching to the park's edge. Then his eyes caught the spots of khaki and blue. Scattered throughout the crowd were hundreds of soldiers and police, all scanning the sky, all with weapons ready.

The crowd knew something important was up.

They murmured audibly now, twisted in their places, and stared around them. The speaker glanced quickly at the chairman for encouragement. Lingle bent over and whispered rapidly. The chairman rose and walked toward the speaker. Lingle propelled the colonel after him.

"You'll have to warn them," he said. "If there is any shooting, we'll have a panic."

In the press box, a radio announcer took a signal from the chairman, shrugged his shoulders, pointed at his mike, and shook his head.

His lips formed the silent words, "Still dead."

Bill looked over to the glass-walled control room set into the concrete. Inside it, the engineer sat stolidly, his hands on the controls.

Bill jumped into the press box and shook the announcer by the sleeve. "Why is your operator riding again, if you're still off the air?"

The announcer looked into the control booth. "I don't know," he answered. "He's not our man. I've never seen him before."

The speaker's voice was cut sharply by a shot.

He hesitated, began again. There were more shots. The voice stopped.

Bill jumped back to the platform. A woman screamed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," began the colonel. There were more screams. The shooting continued. The crowd looked up at the sky in the direction of the pointing rifles. They moved as if their heads were on the same swivel. The colonel stopped and looked up, too.

It was as large as a high-flying pigeon and diving steadily. Now the size of a hawk. A dozen rifles cracked at it but it still hurtled earthward.

The crowd swayed and bulged in mounting terror.

The colonel raised his arms, tried vainly to make himself heard, and then stared at death winging for the very spot on which he stood.

Bill pushed his way through the paralyzed musicians toward the control room. The operator sat at the console, his hands on two of the gain controls, his head and eyes moving with the flight of the plane. Bill tried the control room door. It was locked. Out of the corner of his eye, he could just make out the familiar outline of the P-39 as it dove lower.

Both the colonel and Lingle were shoot-

ing now, aiming their pistols with futile care. The noise of the crowd was indescribable.

Bill pushed at the door, then threw his weight against the thick glass face of the control room. The engineer, his eyes hidden behind sun-glasses, paid no attention. He gave one of the dials a violent twist and watched the P-39 fixedly as it looped, then climbed steeply to a position some hundred yards right in front of the podium.

Bill backed up to get a running start and, with a last look at the plane now zooming directly toward them, hurled himself at the double windows and the remote pilot. Ten feet from them, he left the ground in a great leap.

As his head and arm shattered the glass, he thought he saw very clearly the face and foot of the Princeton tackle as he kicked six years before.

He landed squarely on the engineer in a shower of glass. They struck the floor heavily. He tried to rise. The man caught his foot and twisted, hard. He kicked free and pulled himself up to turn the dial to the right as far as it would go.

The plane answered, wheeled in a wide arc away from the podium. Warm blood fell on the dials from the gashes on Bill's head. He slumped against the wall.

Dully, he saw the engineer clamber from the floor and reach for the console. He threw all his failing strength forward and landed a single blow.

Over the diminishing noise of the plane there were two shots. The man's head cracked on the metal chair and then on the floor as he crumpled.

Far away, Bill heard the boom of an explosion. Dully, through the jagged glass of the control room, he saw the sun glint on the colonel's pistol. He passed out.

He woke up, peering archly upward with one unbandaged eye. The colonel came into focus.

"The plane?"

He tried to sit up.

"Blew itself up a quarter of a mile in back of the band stand. Nobody hurt." The colonel pushed Bill's shoulders gently back onto the stretcher.

He became aware that someone held his hand.

He turned his head.

"Nancy!" he cried.

She bent over and kissed him.

"Willy, boy," she said, "what on earth have you been doing?"

He smiled beneath the bandage.

"Nothing, nothing at all," he said. "Same old thing—Captain."

She kissed him again as he fell asleep.

The colonel cleared his throat the way all colonels do.

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THE LADY OF DEATH

By BRUNO FISCHER

He was dead when he hit the floor.

I MET Keith Clemens twice. The first time was when he was accused of embezzlement. The matter was brought to my attention by Humanity Insurance, Inc., through their Mr. Henry Greg.

"Clemens?" I said in surprise. "I understand that he is the largest insurance broker in the city."

Greg shrugged. "What he did isn't unusual. Clemens was honest enough until something happened. In his case it's a wife who wants to be a social big-shot, which means living beyond her means. Clemens built her a grand new home. Business suddenly took a turn for the

Shaken, desperate, he followed his last trail of murder—a trail that led back to—himself!

worse, so he dipped into his client's premiums. I imagine he intended to make good, but he had taken too much. We got wise when a house burned down and the owner put in a claim on a policy Clemens had issued in our name, but for which we'd never seen a cent."

"And so you want action," I said.

"We want the money back. We don't care what happens to Clemens."

I took time to think. "I'll have Clemens here in my office at three this afternoon. Meanwhile, I would prefer that you did not discuss the matter."

"All we want is the money," Greg repeated.

The story could have made headlines, but I am one district attorney who does not go in for that kind of publicity. I do my job as I see fit, tempering justice with understanding. Selma, my wife, tells me that that is why I have been reelected to office four times in spite of the fact that there is no political machine behind me.

Keith Clemens was obviously distraught when, promptly at three o'clock, he entered my office. He was a rather pudgy, middle-aged man, and his eyes looked positively sick.

Greg arrived a few minutes later. We got down to business. Clemens was anxious to do all in his power to avoid a scandal. Oddly, he was more concerned over that than over going to jail.

Fortunately, the forty thousand dollars out of which he had defrauded the company was not an impossible sum. There was room for a second mortgage on his house; a loan could be raised on his rather large insurance policy. That would cover only part of it, but a certain amount of his income could be set aside monthly to make payments on the remainder.

While I was working on it with paper and pencil, my telephone rang. It was Selma.

"John, I have just had a talk with Mable Swan."

"Swan?" I said. "You mean that young woman who was picked up for shoplifting?"

"John, she has two children and they were hungry. She never had a chance to be decent."

"She is a criminal," I said. "And please, Selma, do I have to remind you that the voters elected me—and not my wife?"

Savagely Selma hung up. She is the best wife a man ever had, but she insists on taking advantage of my official position. Rather, to try, for I never let her. Shrugging, I turned back to Greg and Clemens.

Greg liked my plan. His company, as he explained, was not out for blood but for its money. So it was arranged.

Clemen's eyes misted with grateful tears as he shook my hand. "How can I ever thank you, Mr. Dreyer?"

"By learning a lesson," I told him sternly.

"Don't worry, I've learned it." He fumbled with his hat and cleared his throat. "I'd hate my wife to find out about this. Well, you know."

I assured him that there was no reason for any of the story to go outside my office. In fact, I felt rather proud of the judicious way I had handled the matter, and that night I told Selma about it.

Selma was not impressed. She said with a trace of bitterness in her voice, "I'm thinking of poor Mable Swan whom you are going to send to the workhouse."

"I'm not. The judge probably will. It's her third offense."

"But you could change the charge from felony to petty larceny. That will get her off with a light sentence."

"She's a thief," I said.

"Isn't Clemens a thief also? You let him off."

"I'm afraid you don't understand law. Humanity Insurance Company withdrew its complaint against Clemens. In fact, it never made a complaint. On the other hand, the department store in which Mable Swan was caught shoplifting desires to prosecute. In either case, my hands are tied."

"It just doesn't seem fair."

"That is the law, and I am sworn to uphold it," I said severely.

Selma smiled wryly. "Heaven help me if I ever run foul of the law, whether I'm your wife or not."

I gave her a sharp glance. "What in the world are you talking about?"

"Don't look so startled, John," she said. "My most heinous crime so far was to pass a red light."

Laughing at the notion of Selma being a criminal, I took her into my arms. "I

much prefer you with me than in a gloomy jail," I told her.

THE second time I saw Keith Clemens was six weeks later. He was, by then, a corpse.

I got to his sumptuous new suburban home about fifteen minutes after Homicide. Keith Clemens was still in the bathtub where he had died.

"I read that's the way high-class Romans used to do it," Lieutenant Newsome said. "They stretched out in a hot bath and open their veins and fell asleep. If you have to do it, I can't think of a better way. Here's the note he left."

Generally we are suspicious of apparent suicides, but there was no doubt about this. You can't remove a man's clothing and put him into a bath without splashing water; and you can't come upon him and slash his wrists without creating a rumpus. Mrs. Clemens was having a bridge party downstairs when it happened, and nobody heard a thing.

The note was brief and to the point. "I can't go on," it said. Then his signature and nothing else.

Alan Barnet, the brightest of my assistants, and I, stood looking down at the corpse. A district attorney isn't supposed to have emotions, but I felt sorry for him.

"I guess he couldn't raise the rest of the money after all," Barnet muttered, "and was afraid of being clapped into jail. Or maybe in spite of everything he could do, his wife was still spending too much. There she is in the bedroom. She's a looker, isn't she, Chief?"

Hannah Clemens was not unattractive. She was inclined toward plumpness, but she carried her figure well and her face was pleasant and unlined. She was standing, staring straight ahead of her in dazed unbelief. When I questioned her, she responded in a dull monotone.

I didn't learn any more from her than Lieutenant Newsome had. But I did learn that she had no knowledge of her husband's embezzlement. Needless to say, I did not mention it to her. Not then nor later when Humanity Insurance was out to make trouble by insisting on its due from his policy.

I stepped in and told Hannah Clemens that her husband had left a mountain of debts, which was obviously why he had taken his life, and that she ought to pay. She did, without a murmur. At that, some ten thousand dollars and the house, although mortgaged to the hilt, was left.

I thought I had heard and seen the last of the Clemens' when, several weeks later, she called me on the telephone to make an appointment with me. I arranged it for my first free half hour that afternoon.

When that was settled, she was silent for a moment. Then her voice came flatly over the wire. "Mr. Dreyer, I know about my husband's trouble with you."

"Oh," I said.

"He left a diary," she said. "It's all in there." Then she hung up.

In my office later that day Hannah Clemens shifted her glance disapprovingly from Miss Hamilton, my secretary, to Alan Barnet, and finally to me.

"Mr. Dreyer, you promised me that this interview would be strictly confidential."

"Within this office," I amended. "Miss Hamilton and Mr. Barnet are aware of your husband's embezzlement. You spoke of a diary he left?"

She settled herself in one of my leather chairs and crossed her knees. Her composure was admirable.

"I found the diary the day after the suicide," she said. "It was horrible. I don't mean the trouble he got into with you; that was bad enough. But what happened after—the blackmail."

"Blackmail!" Barnet echoed.

Hannah Clemens nodded. "Somebody found out and threatened to expose Keith. Of course if it got around, his business would be ruined, and there would be a frightful scandal. So he had to pay, although I can't see how he managed. Then, after he had given the blackmailer nine thousand dollars—"

"In one sum?" I broke in.

"No. On three different occasions. Each time, he thought he would be let alone after he paid, but he wasn't, and he couldn't go on. If he continued to submit to the blackmailer, he would not be able to meet his payments to Humanity Insurance and he would go to prison. If he didn't pay the blackmailer, he would face exposure. So—"

Her voice broke; her composure was gone.

"May I see the diary?" I said.

She wrung the strap of her handbag. "I burned it the day I read it. Naturally I didn't want anybody to see it. Then a few days ago the blackmailer got in touch with me. She wasn't satisfied with driving Keith to suicide. She—"

"She?" I said. "What makes you think it is a woman? Did you see or speak to her?"

"Both. First she phoned me. At that time I couldn't tell whether the voice belonged to a man or a woman. It was disguised, I imagine. But there was no doubt that it was the same person who had blackmailed Keith. She knew all the details. She demanded two thousand dollars more."

"Impossible!" I said. "Nobody could have found out."

"You can't be sure there wasn't a leak at Clemens' end of the affair," Barnet offered. "I mean, maybe a girl in his brokerage office. Or maybe he confided in some woman."

"Keith had no confidante beside myself," Hannah Clemens told him stiffly.

"Go on with your story, Mrs. Clemens," I said quietly.

"THE blackmailer sounded desperate. She said that this was absolutely the last time she would ask for money. She instructed me to prepare two thousand dollars in small bills and take them the following night, Friday, to Central Drive and Water Road. What could I do? Even though my husband was dead, I couldn't allow his memory to be besmirched."

"And save your own reputation," I added to myself.

Aloud I said, "What time did you deliver the money?"

"At exactly ten o'clock."

"That was Friday," I pointed out, "and today is Tuesday. Why did you delay coming to me?"

"I've been thinking about it. That woman is my husband's murderer as much as if she slashed his wrists herself. She must be found and punished."

"We'll do our best. You say you saw her?"

"Yes," she said. "When I handed her the money. . . . I drove there in my car. As soon as I stopped she stepped out from the shadow of a tree and reached a hand into my car window. When I say I saw her, I don't mean I actually saw her face. She was wearing a heavy veil. But I can describe her and what she wore. She was rather tall and slender and had a very graceful walk. Her hair was honey-brown and—"

"Like Miss Hamilton's?" Barnet suggested.

Miss Hamilton patted her hair and flushed. I noticed for the first time that it was very charming hair. She was, in fact, a very pretty young woman. I am afraid that I am not the kind of man who takes his secretary's appearance into consideration. Selma always says that I am inclined to be stodgy.

"Yes," Hannah Clemens said. "She was wearing a hat and the light was poor, but her hair was very similar to this woman's. As for her clothes—she was wearing a black and white civet cat."

"Civet cat?" I muttered blankly.

"A coat," Miss Hamilton explained to me. "Your wife has a black and white civet cat coat."

"So that's what they call it!" I said. "I am afraid I am not an authority on woman's wear. What else, Mrs. Clemens?"

"Her hat was a little black felt calot." She stared at the ceiling as if trying to recapture the picture. "Oh, yes—and it had red and black suède flowers bunched in front."

I noticed that Miss Hamilton hadn't written a word of the description of the hat. Her pencil was poised an inch above her pad, and her gaze was fixed on me with a kind of horror. No, horror is too strong a word, but her expression certainly was odd.

And I saw that Alan Barnet was stirring his lanky length against the wall and carefully not looking at me.

What in the world had got into them?

"Did you write that down, Miss Hamilton?" I said sharply.

She remembered her job, and made hurried pothooks.

There wasn't much else that Hannah Clemens could tell me. After she was gone, there was a curious silence in the office.

I said, "Barnet, get a copy of the tran-

By CHARLES BOSWELL

MIDSUMMER MAYHEM

THE solution of most mysteries hang on a thread, as the saying goes. The "thread" in this instance was an axe. Yet it was an axe of magical, gossamer quality, for after successfully performing its double function, that of cleaving the skulls of two respectable and eminently worthy people, it disappeared into the dark, swirling vortex which constitutes Mystery, and after more than half a century still remains a mystery.

"Maggie, Maggie!" shouted a vibrant female voice, on that hot, fetid morning of Thursday, August 4, 1892. "Come

down quick. Somebody's murdered father!"

Such was the summons sounded only a few minutes after the wielding of the axe, a summons to drama, to tragedy, to mystery. Bridget Sullivan stirred sleepily in her airless attic hired-girl's room. Her name was Bridget but they called her Maggie because the slavey before her had gone by that name and the Borden family found it difficult to accustom themselves to change.

"Yes, Miss Lizzie," Maggie answered, already off her cot and essaying the descent of the perilous back stairs. "What did you say, Miss Lizzie? Is it time to start dinner yet?"

It was not time for dinner; it was barely 11:15. The full import of the clarion call had either fallen dully on Maggie's ears and she hadn't understood what she

another. He had interests in the Merchants Manufacturing Co., the Globe Yarn Mills, and the Troy Cotton and Woolen Co. In addition, he owned farms across the Taunton, and a business block and several houses on the near side of the river.

Withal, he lived simply at 92 Second Street in the drab frame structure which figures conspicuously in this story. It was comfortably yet plainly furnished. However there were many evidences of plain living and extreme thriftiness.

Mr. Borden was married twice, but his children were both by his first wife—Emma, 37, and Lizzie, 32. Their mother, the former Sarah Morse, had died when they were quite young, and their father, after a proper period of mourning, had taken to wife Abby Durfee Gray, a woman only a few years his junior.

A house of brooding terror . . . a girl who knew Death not wisely but too well—and a grim murder riddle that still baffles the world after half a century!

heard, or, understanding, had dismissed proper reception as faulty and erroneous, not to say absurd and fantastic. People simply didn't murder father—father, that is, to the Misses Emma and Lizzie Borden. For to do so would be to take a stand with him, to go against his wishes, to defy him—Lord forbid!—and Andrew Jackson Borden was not the man to trifle with opposition or insubordination.

He was 70, yet he bore himself as straight as the proverbial ramrod. He was tall and lean and his jaw was as stern as his gaze was forbidding. He was a New Englander through and through, with all those characteristics of thrift and frugality, industry and Puritanism that the phrase popularly connotes.

He was born in Fall River, as were several generations of his ancestors, and he had lived in the little coastal Massachusetts city all his life. He was born, too, in moderate circumstances, but here he deviated from pattern: he had prospered; he had become, in fact, wealthy, and his means were variously estimated at between $300,000 and $500,000. He was the president of one bank and a director in

Such, so far, could be the history in brief of many quiet, retiring New England families, but from that morning of August 4 it diverges widely. Sensationalism, like a tornado, descended on the house, and each of its rooms and each of its occupants were twisted wrong side up to both official and public scrutiny. Never, in fact, in the annals of American crime has murder created such clamor, such contention, such dispute. And yet the furor stemmed from roots apparently so placid and serene it is no wonder that Bridget—alias Maggie—Sullivan failed to believe her Irish ears.

"What did you say, Miss Lizzie?"

The girl reached the foot of the stairs and stepped into the kitchen. She came face to face with Lizzie Borden, a dark-haired, steady-eyed spinster whose bearing and mien were not unlike Mr. Borden's. There were wilfulness and determination in her look, but now her cheeks were flushed and her mouth worked with strange excitement.

"Somebody's murdered father," said Lizzie. "We've got to get a doctor."

Maggie gulped, staring wide-eyed. Her incredulous gaze reluctantly followed the

sweep of Lizzie Borden's pointed finger and through the sitting room door she envisioned such carnage as to affect her dreams from that day on. Mr. Borden lay as he frequently did at that time of morning, precisely, in fact, as the servant girl had last seen him forty-five minutes before. He was outstretched on a mohair sofa, his head on a pillow, his feet on the floor. He had taken off his stiff serge coat and this rested neatly folded on one arm of his couch, while in its place he had donned a light cotton house jacket.

"Oh, oh!" Maggie shrieked, for in one awful respect Mr. Borden's appearance was far from usual. His face was unrecognizable. His face and his white beard and his patriarchal white head were all one harrowed, blood-sodden mass, and the blood had gushed and spattered all over his jacket and the pillow and the sofa.

"Get hold of yourself, Maggie," said Lizzie Borden. "Run and fetch Dr. Bowen."

MAGGIE rushed out and across the street, only to learn that Dr. Bowen wasn't at home. But like many "Maggies" of her day, she apparently had little mind or initiative of her own; she returned for further orders, and in the hurried, frantic doing attracted the attention of the Borden's next door neighbor to the north, Mrs. Churchill.

The word "murder" sufficed for this good lady, spurring her to action. She raced for help to a livery stable down the block and from there sent a man after the police.

"Who did it, Miss Lizzie?" asked Maggie, breathless, now returned to the house.

"I don't know," said Lizzie Borden. "Look, Maggie, run over to Miss Russell's house and get her. Hurry, girl, hurry!"

Once more Maggie was off, now after Lizzie's best friend, and in the wake of her departure Mrs. Churchill entered.

"Why, the murderer may still be in the house," she gasped, once the situation had been explained to her, and she, too, had taken a look in the sitting room. "Come on, Lizzie. Grab up that broom. Let's hunt upstairs."

But Lizzie Borden sank into a chair. She fanned herself—perhaps a bit too vigorously—with a newspaper. Mrs. Churchill administered to her briefly, applying a whiff of ammonia from a bottle on the pantry shelf, and then the adventuresome, intrepid neighbor skirted cautiously through the dining room and parlor and up the front stairs alone.

She had a flatiron in her hand and she looked capable of swinging it. She took the stairs quietly, on tiptoe. Whatever or whoever she expected to find, she was undoubtedly startled at what she did discover as her eyes reached the level of the upper floor and she peered through the bannisters, along the carpet of the landing, and through the open door of the upstairs front room, used as a guest room.

Mrs. Borden—Lizzie's stepmother—lay prone on the floor, between a high headboarded, old-fashioned double bed and an equally old-fashioned marble-topped bureau. Like her husband's, her skull, too, was cleaved in, her hair matted with blood, and it was obvious, even from the distance at which Mrs. Churchill gawked at her, that she was far past human aid.

Mrs. Churchill scuttled back downstairs. "Another one," she told Lizzie, grimly, and Lizzie, looking at her matter-of-factly, whispered, "Mrs. Borden? I was afraid she might be up there. I thought for a moment I heard her come in."

"Come in from where?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"She went out awhile back," said Lizzie. "She had a note from someone who's sick."

With such a situation were the police of Fall River confronted when they arrived at the Borden residence at approximately 11:40. Chief Hilliard led the other officers, Assistant Chief Fleet and Patrolmen Allen and Harrington. Yet hardly had the police entered the house when it was approached by another man who, strolling unperturbedly along, turning idly through the Borden gate, halted in the yard and picked up a pear and began munching it even as he opened the side door.

John Vinnicum Morse was the uncle of Lizzie and Emma Borden, the brother of Andrew Borden's first wife. Elderly, retired several years from a successful career as an Iowa farmer, he now lived in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, but frequently came to Fall River to visit relatives.

He had arrived, in fact, not twenty-four hours before, shortly after dinner Wednesday.

That afternoon, out of both professional and personal interest, he spent inspecting Andrew Borden's farms across the river in Swansea, later supped with the Bordens and then slept in the very guest room in which his hostess subsequently met her death.

Mr. Morse did not finish his pear. So horrified was he at news of what had happened in the house since his departure that morning, that the piece of fruit fell from his hands. He had been calling on a nephew across town, he said. Coming back by way of trolley car, he had timed his return to coincide with the Bordens' noonday meal, all unsuspecting, of course, that two of the family would never partake of this or any other repast.

"Oh, Lizzie," her uncle exclaimed. "Your poor father! And poor Mrs. Borden! Has Emma been told?"

"Not yet," said Lizzie Borden, needlessly touching a handkerchief to her eyes. "Will you take care of it, Uncle John? She's been visiting in Fairhaven since Monday, you know. Break the news to her gently, Uncle John. I'm afraid my sister's not so strong as I."

By such comparison did Lizzie Borden aptly describe the chief characteristic of her own personality: strength. In the weeks and months to come, hers was to be a test of endurance rarely put to any man, much less a woman, without that person reaching the breaking point. And yet this tensile daughter of New England retained her composure throughout.

MEANWHILE Maggie, the hired girl, came back to the house. With her was Lizzie's friend and confidante, Alice Russell, for whom she'd been sent. Mr. Morse despatched a carefully worded telegram to the absent Emma, bidding her return, yet before this was well on its way, Dr. Dolan, one of the county medical examiners had arrived, performed preliminary examinations on the hacked bodies, and now he had pronouncements to make.

"They were both killed with an axe or something like that, maybe a hatchet." The doctor's gaze roved about the stiff Victorian parlor in which he held conference, as though searching even there for the bloody weapon. "In my opinion, Mrs. Borden died first. Her body seems colder than Mr. Borden's. But how much sooner —well, I can't tell yet."

Chief Hilliard had a difficult task to perform, one in which experience offered him little counsel. To question the participants in a barroom brawl, or a back street knifing—such catechisms were one thing, this another. Rarely had murder occurred in Fall River high places, never a gruesome double murder, never one in which the stories of all witnesses did not nicely coincide and center the blame on some convenient tramp or foreigner. But here there were no tramps, no foreigners, and as the stories of those concerned unwound, there appeared instead startling discrepancies.

On the Tuesday night preceding the murders both Mr. and Mrs. Borden were ill. Lizzie, too, after dining with them, said she had a pain in her stomach, but it did not nauseate her as it did her elders.

On Wednesday night Lizzie visited Alice Russell. She told her friend she thought someone was trying to poison the family, possibly through their milk supply, and when Miss Russell dismissed this idea as absurd, Lizzie said, "Well, laugh if you want, but I'll just bet something awful happens."

Lizzie returned to Second Street before 9 o'clock. Her uncle was chatting in the sitting room with Mr. and Mrs. Borden, but Lizzie went on up to bed without saying good night to any of them.

Maggie was the first to arise the morning of the tragedy, at 6 sharp. She had breakfast on the table by 7 and Mr. and Mrs. Borden and John Morse sat down together. Mr. Morse left the house, en route to his nephew's, before 8. At 8:30 Lizzie came downstairs and had some toast and a cup of coffee alone, despite the fact that the rest of the family had breakfasted heavily on mutton, johnny-cakes, and bananas.

At 9 o'clock Mr. Borden left the house to call at his office in the bank and look at his mail. Mrs. Borden instructed Maggie to wash the downstairs windows, on the outside, and while the hired girl went about preparations for this, gathering to-

gether bucket and rags, her mistress announced she was going upstairs to make the guest room bed.

Lizzie set up an ironing board in the dining room. She had some handkerchiefs to press, she said. At 10 o'clock Maggie returned from the yard, her window washing done, and at 10:15 there was a ring at the front doorbell.

Maggie went to the door to admit Mr. Borden. His passkey had failed him, for not only was the door locked as usual, but it was bolted from the inside. Mr. Borden then proceeded to the sitting room. Lizzie followed him in and while he was changing into his congress gaiters and house jacket, she asked if he would not like the shades drawn while he was taking his nap.

"Maggie," said Lizzie, "what are your plans? I noticed a sale of dress goods downtown—eight cents a yard."

"No," said the hired girl, "I think I'll take one." By this she meant a nap, or rest, and inasmuch as she'd been up for hours, working hard, and the day was sweltering and exhausting, she climbed to her room and was heard from no more for better than forty-five minutes.

To these simple facts both Lizzie's and Maggie's stories agreed, but from here on came contradictions. Maggie said Lizzie told her she became aware of something wrong when she heard groans from the house as she was standing in the yard, whereas Mrs. Churchill told the police that when she asked Lizzie where she'd been just prior to discovering her murdered father, Lizzie replied, "I was out in the barn hunting for a piece of wire. There's a hole in my screen and I wanted to fix it. I heard nothing, absolutely nothing. When I came in the house, this is what I saw."

Chief Hilliard examined the screens covering Lizzie's bedroom windows, finding no injury. Perplexed he went to Lizzie herself and asked for an accounting of her whereabouts during the course of Maggie's nap.

"Why, I kept on ironing to begin with," said Lizzie. "And then my iron got cold, and I went to the stove for another one but I found the fire gone down, and I put on a stick of wood."

"You left the house?"

"Yes, I went into the yard. And from the yard went to the barn, hunting for some lead for sinkers. You see, I was going to the country for a week or so next Monday and I knew there were some fishing lines there but I remembered from last year they didn't have any weights."

Inasmuch as the front door was always kept locked, Hilliard knew that a stranger could have entered the house only by the side door. This entrance, however, was plainly visible from the barn. Why, then, had Lizzie not seen the murderer?

"I was in the loft of the barn," said Lizzie. "Father told me the sinkers were up there on a bench. I was in the loft for twenty minutes or so, but I didn't find what I was looking for."

This airless loft was directly beneath a tin roof. The temperature there, less than an hour before noon, must have been upwards of 95 degrees. Hilliard deemed it inconceivable that a woman—no matter how interested in fishing—would subject herself to such sweating, merciless punishment unless the demand were more urgent.

HERE, indeed, was a point inconsistent with plausibility, but there was another which took further odds. Lizzie said that when Mr. Borden entered the house at 10:15 and asked for his wife, that Maggie informed him Mrs. Borden had gone to call on a sick neighbor; whereas Maggie claimed that such could hardly have been the case inasmuch as she had no knowledge of the alleged sick call until an hour later—and then from Lizzie's own lips.

In addition, two circumstantial facts contradicted Lizzie: the floor of the barn loft was thick with dust and bore no tracks, and Mrs. Borden was found dead in the house dress and apron in which she'd breakfasted, not her street costume.

"I was in the kitchen when father rang," maintained Lizzie. "I didn't even see him until he got to the sitting room, but I heard the hired girl talking to him."

"Why, Miss Lizzie," exclaimed Maggie, "how can you sit there and tell such a whopper? You know you weren't in the kitchen then. When I opened the door for Mr. Borden, you were coming down the front stairs!"

Was Mrs. Borden already dead at that moment? If so, why had not Lizzie, if descending the stairs, seen the body, as had Mrs. Churchill, ascending the same stairs an hour later?

Chief Hilliard wondered.

As the investigation progressed, the exact time of Mrs. Borden's death increased in importance. According to Lizzie's stories to the officers, it was between 9:45 and 10 o'clock that a boy came with a message calling her stepmother out. Though Lizzie saw the boy, she did not recognize him, nor did she learn who was sick. Mrs. Borden left the house ten minutes later.

If this were true, then the unfortunate woman could hardly have got back in the house, gone upstairs to the front room, changed her clothes and been viciously murdered by 10:15. Yet the medical examiner *had* placed her time of death at some moment previous to her husband's. How previous? If, in truth, Mrs. Borden was dead when her husband rang the doorbell, Chief Hilliard believed he saw the reason behind Lizzie's strategy—if strategy it was.

At 10:15 she had already slaughtered her stepmother. From the very performance of this act she was returning downstairs when Mr. Borden rang. She trumped up the story of the sick call in order to forestall further inquiry from her father as to Mrs. Borden's whereabouts. Previously she had double-locked the front door in order that the slaying might not be interrupted.

She was solicitous about preventing light from shining in her father's eyes as he lay on the couch, not from any real concern as to whether or not he rested, but because she figured she could better attack him without fear of observation if the shades in the sitting room were drawn. And by the same token she tried to lure the hired girl out of the house with news of a cheap yard goods sale. Maggie's fatigue and subsequent retirement upstairs made further urging in this direction unnecessary. Her field was clear.

And yet, thinking it over, Chief Hilliard shuddered at the consequences of what most police officers strive to achieve—the clarity of his own logic. Lizzie Borden had an unblemished reputation in Fall River. She was an active member of the Central Congregational Church, an arduous worker in the Fruit and Flower Mission. Recently she had been elected to the secretaryship of the Christian Endeavor Society and for many years she had participated conscientiously in the futile affairs of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

She was, in short, one of the younger pillars of reserved, conservative, upper bracket Fall River community life, and for Hilliard to picture such a maiden, of careful upbringing and seeming conduct, in the rôle of axe murderess—smashing out the brains of her stepmother on one floor and then proceeding downstairs to deal similarly with her father—well, to say the least, it was difficult. And for many, Hilliard knew, it would be unbelievable. Whereupon the police chief decided to continue with as much caution as the evidence would allow.

"Do you suspect anyone, Miss Lizzie? Has your father had trouble with anybody lately?"

No relief showed in the woman's immobile countenance as Hilliard's questions turned from definite insinuation to general speculation, and she began answering him in tones as flat and lacking in feeling as before.

Yes, there had been trouble. Only last week, said Lizzie, her father ordered a man from the house. The fellow wanted to rent a store in the Borden block; her father refused him. "I thought you'd rent to anybody—for money," said the man; at which point Mr. Borden properly ejected him.

Then there was the "Mystery of the Noises in the Night", as the family titled this repetitive series of disturbances. They had begun in early July and continued on for better than two weeks. Everybody but Lizzie attributed the noises to pigeon thieves. There was a cote in the barn and indeed pigeons had been missing, but Lizzie's sensitivity to the ominous had right along predicted that the noises were of more dire significance.

"And you know, of course, about the burglary we had last year," Lizzie told Chief Hilliard.

"Oh, yes," said the chief. He recalled the details vividly.

In June, 1891, Mr. Borden reported the desk in his second floor bedroom broken into. $125 in gold and banknotes, together with a watch and other trinkets of Mrs. Borden's, were missing. Everyone wondered how the thief could have got in the house; Lizzie suggested the cellar hatch. Even so, everyone wondered further how, once in the house—inasmuch as Mr. and Mrs. Borden always kept their bedroom door locked—the thief could have gained access to this private chamber. Again Lizzie had an answer. She produced a bent nail which, she said, she found in a keyhole.

Two weeks passed. Mr. Borden met Chief Hilliard on the street. "I'm afraid you officers will never catch the burglar," said the banker. There was a note of apology in his voice, as though he realized he shouldn't have bothered to trouble the police in the first place. Thinking back on it, Chief Hilliard wondered but what he had been a bit dense in not sensing a deeper meaning inherent in the old gentleman's remark.

BEYOND a doubt Lizzie Borden suffered money hunger. So much was evident once the chief began delving into the intricacies of the Second Street family relationship. Another uncle of Lizzie's knew all. Hiram Harrington, husband to Andrew Borden's sole surviving sister, appointed himself Hilliard's principal fiscal informant.

Both Emma and Lizzie received from their father annual allowances of $200 a year—a not inconsiderable sum in the 'Nineties. In addition, Mr. Borden had deeded the spinsters a double house on Ferry Street. They collected the rents from this, yet Lizzie, in particular, was dissatisfied. The property was appraised at $3,000. Soon Lizzie insisted that taxes, maintenance and insurance were arithmetical matters too involved for the feminine heads of either Emma or herself; they resold the property to Mr. Borden. This subsequent transaction cost him $5,000—two more than he had originally estimated the place to be worth.

Lizzie was intensely envious of her stepmother, from a monetary standpoint. Mrs. Borden owned half interest in a house on Fourth Street. That the property might be wholly under her control, Mr. Borden bought out the other fifty per cent equity and gave it to his wife. Hearing of the deal, Lizzie sulked. Her father, she complained, favored Mrs. Borden to the neglect of his daughters. This sulking had begun just prior to the fateful day, August 4. Lizzie took it to an extreme; she refused to sit down to the table with the rest of the family.

Here, Chief Hilliard picked up a further contradiction in the poker-faced spinster's story: she had *not* eaten from the same dishes as had her father and stepmother that Tuesday night when Mr. and Mrs. Borden fell ill—when Lizzie said she herself was a little sick at the stomach.

Perhaps, Chief Hilliard speculated, there was more to Lizzie's alleged fear of poisoning, as expressed to Alice Russell, than the girl could fathom. How better might a potential murderess divert suspicion from herself than to accuse some mythical person even before the crime was committed? Had an attempt actually been made to poison the elderly couple? Was poison the real reason Lizzie ate by herself, not merely because her bad humor directed her to do so? In which event Chief Hilliard believed he saw John Morse's part, or rather lack of a part, in his niece's original plans: his arrival spoiled them.

Lizzie had got her sister out of the house, but then her Uncle John paid an unexpected visit, frustrating her. Even so, she was not to be wholly thwarted. Denied the opportunity to poison without including among her victims an uncle of whom she was fond, she turned, at the last minute, to a less subtle weapon, yet one with which she could accomplish specific aim.

"The axe!" demanded Hosea Knowlton. "That's what we need—the axe!"

Chief Hilliard got up from his chair in the district attorney's office and paced the floor worriedly. Here he had come with his logic and his evidence, long hours after the murder, but still there was missing an important link in the chain of circumstances involving the dour Lizzie.

"I know, Mr. Knowlton," he said. "I know we need the axe, but we can't find it. My men have hunted all over—in every room and cupboard of that house

on Second Street, all over the yard, the barn, even the outhouse. There simply isn't any axe on the premises that's been used for such a purpose; the one stuck in the chopping block hasn't a bloodstain on it, nor has it been cleaned up, either."

"Then she took it off somewhere and hid it," the district attorney suggested. "Either before she called Maggie downstairs, or afterward. Afterward would be my guess. Why else would she be sending Maggie on those errands—way over to Miss Russell's, four blocks off, for instance? Obviously she wanted to be alone. She needed time to get rid of *something*. Or why wouldn't she have wanted Maggie to stick there with her—if she were innocent, that is? Mrs. Churchill, when she arrived, had a normal reaction. 'Why, the murderer might still be in the house,' said Mrs. Churchill. Would Miss Borden have wanted to remain alone under such circumstances?"

Chief Hilliard ended his conference with Knowlton in an unhappy frame of mind. If the district attorney needed the axe in order to secure an indictment against Lizzie, it was his job to locate it—either that, or some other bit of evidence equally incriminating. But if nothing of the sort materialized, then all he could do would be to confess the case unsolved or attempt to pin the murders on some other suspect.

Maggie? Mrs. Churchill? John Vinnicum Morse?

Not one of the three had a motive for the crimes, nor did they stand to profit by so much as a penny through the death of either of the victims.

The man with whom Mr. Borden had argued over renting a store?

No one knew of this argument but Lizzie, and her description of the man was as vague as that of the boy who had allegedly come with the message for Mrs. Borden. Neither could be found, neither the man nor the boy. Remarkably, Mr. Borden's realty agents had received no recent inquiries concerning the vacant property, nor did any of Mrs. Borden's friends—sick or well—admit to summoning her away from her home around 10 o'clock that morning.

Some chance burglar?

In the weeks and months to come, with those who arose to champion Lizzie's cause, this spectral burglar came to embody a favorite theory. Truly a daring character, he entered a strange house by broad daylight. He went upstairs and murdered one member of the family, idled about for a while, then came down and killed another, leaving unseen, his gory weapon over his shoulder no doubt, probably whistling *Yankee Doodle*.

Yet, seriously, if such a preposterous person did commit the crime, why did he do it? Burglars burglarize—according to Chief Hilliard's experience, at any rate—but nothing was missing from the Borden house, not even the $87 the medical examiner found in Andrew Borden's wallet, nor the watch from his pocket, nor the rings from Mrs. Borden's dead fingers.

EMMA BORDEN returned from Fairhaven late Thursday. On Saturday afternoon, funeral services were held for Mr. and Mrs. Borden, the whole city attending, but the funeral did not follow through to the usual conclusion inasmuch as neither body was actually interred until after an autopsy.

This was finally performed, three days later, by Dr. Edward S. Wood, of Harvard Medical School, and when his prognosis was announced, Lizzie Borden—placed forthwith under arrest—found herself famous.

"I'm not surprised," she said, when taken to Taunton jail. "I expected something of this sort."

Digestion did the trick. When a person dies, his digestive processes immediately cease functioning, of course, and whatever has been eaten recently halts just where it is in either the stomach or the alimentary canal. By such tactics did Dr. Wood determine an almost exact time of death for both Mr. and Mrs. Borden. They had breakfasted—heavily—at 7. Mr. Borden died just after 11, and Mrs. Borden *nearly two hours* before her husband.

Lizzie's stepmother was dead, then, at 10:15, when Mr. Borden returned from the bank. And she was dead, too, for a good forty-five minutes before his return—during which time Lizzie had told the police she saw Mrs. Borden receive a note from a boy and then leave the house to visit a sick friend!

Chief Hilliard and District Attorney

Knowlton sighed with satisfaction as the key turned in Lizzie's cell and they looked on her, yet not without pity—defendant in an airtight case. They had not found the axe, but they had found other evidence. They had not found the axe, but they'd caught Lizzie in a damning lie. They had not found the axe, but what they had was just as good—or so they thought.

On the morning following Lizzie's incarceration, a New York paper came out with an editorial which sounded the keynote of what was to come. This editorial writer decried the strong language used in the warrant of arrest served on Lizzie. "Women," said he, "regardless of their condition, should not be subjected to certain harshnesses inherent in legal expression." Rather than a warrant of a direct, accusatory nature, the editorial writer wanted, apparently, something which would merely suggest a lady felon's predicament to her in subtle, not unflattering terms.

Lizzie attended her preliminary hearing on the arms of two ministers. As she awaited the action of the grand jury, soon to be told she must stand trial, she was consoled—in body, if not in spirit—by chickens, pies and cakes baked for her by ladies of the various missionary auxiliaries to which she belonged.

Mrs. Susan Fessenden, national president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, boldly asserted her belief in Lizzie's innocence, as did Miss Lucy Stone, that doughty advocate of women's suffrage. Lizzie was being "pilloried"; she was being "persecuted" because of her "lack of sophistication", her "lack of protection", the "weakness of her sex".

"I tell you, she couldn't have done it! A thin little woman like her couldn't swing an axe like that!"

"Why would she want to kill her old man? He was seventy, wa'n't he? In a few years she'd get his money anyhow, wouldn't she?"

"It was some man done it, not Lizzie. An axe ain't a woman's weapon. They don't go in much for gore."

Such street corner comments, beginning in Fall River, spread throughout the country. Husbands and wives argued her plight over breakfast tables. A man in Philadelphia was put off a streetcar because he alone—among a car full of people—believed Lizzie guilty and expressed his belief in neither uncertain nor quiet tones. *Cause célèbre* is not an American expression, but be that as it may, it can well be applied to the Borden case. Lizzie became a national issue.

The Honorable George D. Robinson, three times governor of Massachusetts, was employed as chief of her defense counsel, at a reputed fee of $25,000—and he was well worth to her every cent he got. For when the case came to trial in New Bedford, in May, 1893, the prosecution was not without more evidence than has so far been described, and Mr. Robinson needed all his guile and persuasiveness to combat that new evidence.

Despite their friendship, Alice Russell testified against Lizzie. She had been with her, she said, on the night following the funeral, when Lizzie came downstairs to the Borden kitchen, raised the lid of the stove, and thrust a dress into the flames. It took only a small part of District Attorney Knowlton's talent to suggest to the jury that this garment, so quickly destroyed, was perhaps bloodstained.

Eli Bence, pharmacist, was called as a state's witness, but before he could open his mouth, the defense asked that the jury be excluded until the admissibility of what Mr. Bence had to say could be passed upon. The jury was excluded and Mr. Bence had plenty to say.

Lizzie Borden came into his drug store on the day before the murders. She wanted to buy prussic acid—for killing moths, she told him. Because of the highly poisonous character of the chemical, he refused to sell it to her. Over the strenuous objections of the district attorney, the court declared Bence's testimony irrelevant to the case at hand and therefore unfit for the jury's ears.

Lizzie's defense was impressive, if slightly far-fetched. Skirting blithely around the matter of Lizzie's discrepancies and contradictions Mr. Robinson carried two witnesses to dramatic heights never before—or since—reached in a courtroom.

A 14-year-old boy, obviously relishing the occasion, told of being astride the Borden back fence during the entirety of the morning in question. He saw it all, he

said—all but the murder or murderer. He saw Lizzie, however. She *did* go out to the barn. She *did* stay for at least twenty minutes. "And what were you doing on the fence?" asked the district attorney. "Swiping pears," the boy said, grinning.

A woodsman, touched with spiritualism, told another yarn. A week after the murder he was chopping wood near Fall River when he chanced to look over a stone wall. A bearded man knelt there, holding an axe, still bloody. He was praying, out loud. "Oh, Lord," he murmured, "forgive me for murdering the Bordens. Don't let that innocent girl suffer for my crime. Help me, oh Lord, help me." The woodsman rushed in the direction of the kneeling figure, whereupon the figure disappeared.

Such could be labeled Disappearing Axe No. 2 in the Borden case, but it was the inability of the prosecution to produce Axe No. 1 which won Lizzie's acquittal. "If this poor girl committed these murders," argued Mr. Robinson, "with what did she do it? Where is the weapon? Where is the weapon? Where is the weapon?"

And the prosecution had no answer.

LIZZIE BORDEN forthwith became Lizbeth Borden. She and her sister continued living in Fall River, on Second Street, until their father's will was probated, and then—with almost a half million dollars in hand—they bought a large, pretentious mansion called "Maplecroft", on French Street, in a better part of town.

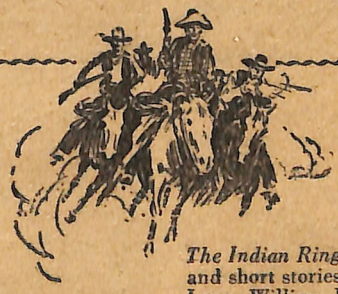
In 1897, Lizzie, alias Lizbeth, once again had a brush with the law. A Providence department store swore out a warrant against her for shoplifting two porcelain paintings. The matter was adjusted. The warrants were never served. The case was hushed up.

Emma Borden separated from her sister around 1903, moving to Newmarket, New Hampshire. Not until her death did anyone in the town know her identity. She left the place only twice a year, to go to Boston in the spring to put her furs in storage, to go to Boston in the fall to take her furs out.

Lizzie Borden died on June 1, 1927, her sister nine days later. All her life a devotee of the arts and to poetry, Lizzie is said to have disliked only one quatrain, authorship unknown, yet immensely popular among the Fall River police and the clerks in the district attorney's office during the early 'Nineties:

"Lizzie Borden took an axe
"And gave her mother forty whacks;
"When she saw what she had done—
"She gave her father forty-one!"

Who knows? Perhaps writers of doggerel verse have a more acute sense of justice than do talesmen on juries?



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"It isn't men who open a new country or win wars—it's their women and children . . . and a gun to talk for them!" Mr. Colt said—and gave a gun to a woman headed Westward. What it did to her, how it affected a skypilot who had always believed that vengeance didn't belong in his hands until he held in them Mr. Colt's creation—how it dealt with saint and sinner alike make up the most unusual Western novel you've ever read—by Tom W. Blackburn!

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ONE MUST DIE!

By HENRY NORTON

Silent, hidden, it sent out its golden lure—a death trap baited five hundred years ago—for a victim of today!

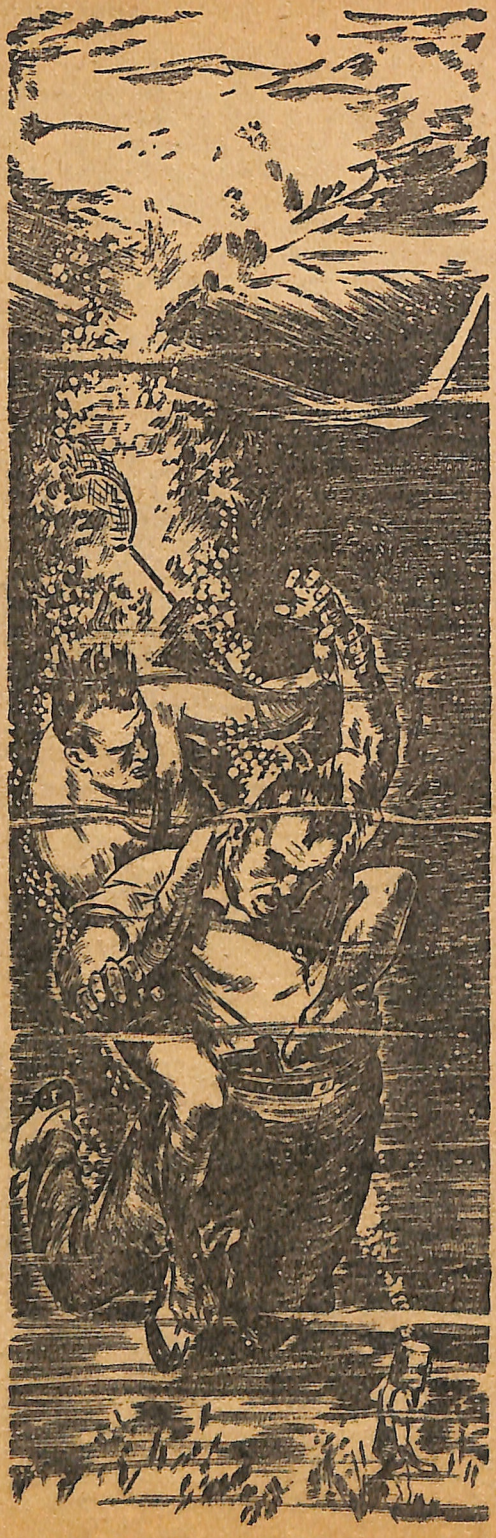
THE lobster kept eluding him. Just when he thought he had it trapped it would slip gravely back and wave its eye stalks at him, as if daring him to come a step closer. Professor Finney was on the verge of losing his temper.

Subduing even a broiled lobster, served with drawn butter of hollandaise sauce, has its complications. The professor's situation was still further complicated by being under three fathoms of water, and wearing on his chubby shoulders a ponderous homemade diving helmet, fashioned from a hot water tank. And his lobster was definitely alive, and definitely wary. Furthermore, it was of an entirely new species.

Professor Finney could have told you how he knew it was a new species. Something about a movable fifth thoracic ring, like *Astacus fluviatilis*.

He took another step through the greenly shining water, and a little school of minnows turned tail and darted out of sight. The lobster was perched on a shelving mound of sand that rose from the ocean floor. Finney raised the long-handled net with both hands and inched toward the crustacean. The lobster waved both eye stalks frantically at the descending net, and scuttled out of sight on the other side of the mound of sand.

Professor Finney swore, mildly, into his helmet. He'd been chasing the green brute for the better part of an hour. His airline dragged heavily behind him, and



Gardner's struggles grew frantic as the seconds ticked away.

he knew he was almost at his limit distance from the launch.

The net had raised a cloud of sand that drifted like smoke in the still water, and slowly settled. Where the lobster had been there was a break in the even shelving line of sand built up by the ageless drift and swirl of the sea bottom. And from the break something gleamed dimly. Professor Finney bent forward to examine it, and water came gurgling up into the back of his helmet to remind him of his situation.

He squatted down then, careful to keep his head erect, and fumbled in the sand. The shining object was like a gold coin. It was crude and heavy, with a stamped profile of a bearded man, and words that could have been Latin. He poked at the mound with his net, and found that the whole thing was composed of similar coins, thinly covered with drifted sand. Wondering, he tucked a couple into the pocket of his swimming trunks.

A few minutes' walking brought him beneath the shadowy outline of his boat. The launch, in common with all Professor Finney's diving equipment, had a distinctly homemade flavor. It was little more than a scow, inboard powered, although its planking was solid, its beam comfortably wide and stable. There was a stout rail around the after deck, except where the short ladder went down. The rest of the equipment was a small gasoline compressor, a straight chair firmly clewed in place, and Mrs. Finney.

The professor ducked out of his heavy helmet and left it spewing bubbles behind him as he swam up through the green water to the stern of the launch. He clambered, dripping, to the deck, and turned to haul up the helmet.

Thus engaged, he was a pleasant, chubby little man in his fifties, with thin, straight brown hair, and good blue eyes strained and watery from years of overuse. His skin was deeply tanned, and as he bent to swing the heavy helmet clear of the water the long muscles of his back stood out, in impressive ridges.

"Well," said his wife, "did you find anything?"

Finney's brow furrowed in annoyance. "I saw that one again, but I'm hanged if I could catch him," he said. "He's the most exasperating brute I ever saw!"

"You should use bait."

"I never have, and I never will," Finney said.

"Well, this is probably a false alarm," she said.

"No, it isn't," said Professor Finney with spirit. "This time I got close enough to see him clearly. The fifth ring moves like a crayfish, but nothwithstanding the creature is of the genus *Homarus*. It's a new species of lobster, and if I can catch the little devil it will be known henceforth as *Homarus Finnius*."

His wife grunted skeptically and rolled up her knitting. "We'd better be getting in," she said. "If you don't catch your bus from Los Gatos you will be known henceforth as Absentee Finney."

HER words were a sharp reminder to the professor of his present condition. The boys' school where he had occupied the post of Zoology teacher having folded under wartime exigency, it had become necessary for him to seek some other means of livelihood. Prompted perhaps by the numerous radio jokes on the subject, he had applied for work as a welder at Lockheed. Somewhat to his surprise, he'd been hired immediately, trained as an electric welder, and put to work on the swing shift.

In many ways, his new occupation was an advantage. For one thing, he was astounded to find that a competent welder earns more than a college professor. For another, going to work in the late afternoon and coming home at midnight gave him almost the entire day in which to explore the shallows of the restless Pacific.

"You'd make a fine impression in one of those absentee questionnnaires," his wife went on. "Didn't get to work because you were taking a walk in the ocean. They'd appreciate that."

"I almost forgot," he said. "I found these."

His wife stood speechless, holding the bright golden discs in her hand. She clinked them thoughtfully together, held them up to her eyes to read the inscription.

"Where did you get these?" she breathed.

"Why . . . down there." Finney pointed vaguely to the shimmering blue surface of the Pacific. "There was a whole stack of them. That's where the lobster hid."

She looked at him incredulously. "Don't you know what these are?"

He answered promptly. "Naturally, my dear."

"And you say there's more?"

"Must be a ton of them," said Professor Finney, and bent over the engine. "Some movie company probably used them in a picture and then dumped them overboard. They look quite real, don't they?"

"Look real!" said his exasperated wife. "They are real! You've found a sunken treasure!"

The professor chuckled. "Miranda, my dear," he said, "please do not allow yourself to be deceived by trifles. Things like that don't happen."

"Can you find the place again?" she asked.

"Why," he considered, "I should think so. There was a mound of sand. The blasted lobster hid behind it."

"Professor," his wife said impatiently, "forget about the lobster. If there's a ton of these down there, you've found a million dollars in gold!"

He looked at her seriously. He was seeing her for the first time. A different woman confronted him. Her hair was still the same soft brown, beginning to gray a little. Her eyes behind the heavy glasses were still hazel-flecked, mildly humorous. There was the same closely woven net of wrinkles about her mouth and the corners of her eyes. But her expression was some how new—an expression few people see in a life time. It was the look of a woman to whom has just come the stunning, maddening hope of great riches. There was no calmness about her now, no peace. There was only a vast and driving desire.

"My dear Matilda," the professor said, "please don't take this too seriously. It's undoubtedly something quite simple and ordinary. Besides," he added, "how do you figure a million dollars?"

"A ton is thirty-two thousand ounces," Matilda said, "and with gold at thirty-five dollars an ounce—bless me, it's more!"

Professor Finney heaved at the flywheel. The engine gave a hoarse cough, then broke into an even sputter. He turned and ran to the fore of the stubby little boat, and began hauling in anchor line. When they were barking along toward shore, he turned to his wife.

"It might be a few pounds more or less," he said.

"It's just off that point of land," said his wife. "Take a line with that red roof behind the point, and where it crosses a line between Cape Valdez and the lighthouse, that's where we were."

"I know where we were," Professor Finney said. "Do you think I'd neglect to take a bearing where that lobster hangs out?"

There was a growing roar behind them, and a Coast Guard cutter came drumming across their wake. Lieutenant Bowlin waved at them from the helm, and cupped his hands to yell something unintelligible.

The Finneys waved back until the fast cutter was small in the distance. The big lieutenant was one of their special friends, although he had irritated the professor more than once by scoffing at his shallow water rambles. "Catch me a Jap submarine," he said on occasion, "and I'll concede some good in it."

Matilda returned to the subject. "It was probably left here by the Spaniards."

"Nonsense," replied her husband. "Lobsters only live eight or ten years at best. Besides, the European type, *Homarus vulgaris*, is much smaller."

Matilda's face contorted in real pain. "Lord love a duck," she said softly. "The man has a million dollars at his finger ends, and all he can think about is a slimy old lobster."

"It's a young lobster," said Finney.

"Forget the lobster!" his wife said sharply. "We are going home for some tackle so we can raise that gold! Do you know how many lobsters you can buy with a million dollars?"

Professor Finney thought about that for a moment, his face wrinkling in concentration. "If this should happen to turn out," he said, looking reflectively at the bright coins, "maybe I can afford to get a new diving helmet—one of those ready-made affairs."

"You can afford a submarine," his wife said. "So let's get some gear and get busy."

"This afternoon?"

"Certainly!"

Professor Finney's round face puckered in a determined scowl. "No," he said. "I'm not going to be absent from work for anything so silly."

Only Matilda's firm grip on the chair kept her from falling overboard. "Silly!" she gasped.

"Matilda," the professor said, and his tone was that of a man determined, "if these coins are really from a sunken treasure, they've been there for three hundred fifty years. In that case, they can wait another two days."

"And why two days?" she snapped.

"Because I want Professor Hergert to look at them first, for one thing," he said. "He'll know if they're any good. Besides, it's just two days till my day off."

FOR an expert on things antique, Professor Theodore Hergert was surprisingly young. He was conscious of this fact, and not displeased by it. He wore his appointment on the staff of one of the state's larger universities with an air of rectitude. His greeting to Professor Finney was shaded by the proper degree of condescension.

"And how is the, ah, wage slave?" he asked genially.

"I manage to keep up with my academic pursuits," said Finney, a little nettled. "In fact, it was about a marine discovery that I wished your advice."

"Really, old chap," Hergert said. "I wouldn't presume to advise you on marine life. It's a bit out of my field, you know. Never appealed to me."

"This isn't exactly marine life," Finney said.

He laid one of the coins on the desk. Hergert's head jerked forward sharply, and he picked up the piece as though he expected it to be hot.

"The devil!" he said. He turned the coin over in his hand, and read the inscription. "A beautiful piece. A real Spanish doubloon. Where did you get it, from a private collection?"

"I suppose you could call it that," Finney said. "I found it on the bottom of the ocean."

Hergert's eyes widened, and the line of his lips went slack for a moment. It was a little time before he could put his immediate thought into words. "Were there —any more of them?"

"Probably a ton," Finney said.

"For God's sake, man, where?"

"In the ocean," said Professor Finney.

Hergert leaned back in his chair and studied the doubloon. His tiny moustache stood out sharply against a sudden pallor on his lips. His hands were not quite steady. His eyes were narrowed in thought.

"Minted coins," he said. "If it were a ship from Peru it would have been gold bullion. So our field is narrowed. There were two Spanish colony ships lost on this coast. I think one was near here."

Finney felt a quick stab of uneasiness. Hergert knew his subject! Well, thanks a lot—" he began.

"Wait a minute," said Hergert, thumbing through the phone directory. He found a number, underlined it heavily with his thumbnail. He talked briefly to the person who answered, and there was excitement in his face when he hung up.

"Just south of Cape Valdez," he said. "The *Santa Ysabella*, a three-hundred ton galleon, bringing money and supplies to the Spanish settlement at Monterey. Captain Ortiz and all hands were lost—pray for their souls."

The words had a heady ring. In his mind Finney could see the stately ship, with the red and white banners of Castile snapping at the mastheads. Mistress of the sea she was, argosy of the mighty land of Spain, ruler of the main and the lands of the New World. Mistress she was, until the winds and the waves of the Pacific struck her, and sent her reeling down to lie and moulder for three and a half centuries while the inquisitive fish darted through her crumbling ribs and strange sea monsters sported over bones and gold alike.

"She carried gold that would be worth a million dollars today," said Hergert. "You're a lucky man, Professor Finney."

Finney's smile held a trace of relief. "Honestly, Professor Hergert, I can't tell you how I appreciate this," he said.

"If I can ever be of service to you—any information on marine flora or fauna—"

"I wonder if you'll think me presumptuous," said Hergert smoothly, "but after all, you won't miss one coin from such a horde, and I'd mightily like a souvenir—" He tossed the doubloon in his hand.

"By all means keep it," Finney said.

Hergert said, "You don't know what this means to me."

PROFESSOR FINNEY was being followed, and it annoyed him. He could think of no reason why a sandy-haired man in nondescript gray should be following him. But the chap had been waiting by the employee's gate, and had ridden with Finney through three transfers. Now, on the lonely bus which took Finney home to Los Gatos beach, the sandy-haired man was still a passenger, sitting two seats back.

The bus ground to a shuddering stop at Los Gatos station, and Finney got off. He heard the man in gray step to the platform behind him, and a quick spark of irritation flared within him. That man didn't have any business getting off at Los Gatos. Finney knew every nearby family, and the man belonged to none of them. He turned quickly, and the man walked a few steps away and hesitated.

"Are you following me?" Finney demanded.

The bus went laboring on toward the next station. The man turned. He was tall, with curiously rigid features; a square jaw, a sharp straight mouth, and a nose that had been broken once and inexpertly mended. When he spoke, his voice was as cold and inflexible as his face.

"I am," he said. "What's it to you?"

For a moment the cool effrontery of the man's answer had Finney off balance, and then curiosity came to sweep aside his mounting anger.

"But why?" he asked.

Broken-nose grinned at him. "Now, Professor," he said, "let's don't play hard-to-get."

"You know me?" asked Finney.

"Sure," said the man. "And I know you got a million bucks in gold too, bud. Now you maybe see why I'm tailin' you."

The pound of Professor Finney's heart was a dull thunder in his ears. He took a threatening step toward the hard-faced man, and saw the stranger's hand slip in beneath his left arm. It was not the gesture so much as some undefinable menace in the man's cool assurance that made the professor stop. Broken-nose grinned again.

"That's right," he said. "Be good."

"You—you rascal!" said Professor Finney.

"Ain't I, though?" said the man.

"Who are you?" Finney demanded. "And what's this nonsense about a million dollars?"

"You can call me Jerry," said the man in gray. "An' don't think we don't know about that treasure you found. We know all about it."

The fear was back in Finney's mind now, coupled with a burning desire to smash the grin off that hard-chiseled face. And there was wonder, too—a quick probing back to discover how the man Jerry could have learned of the ocean gold. And the answer was readily apparent. In all the world no one knew of it but. . . .

"You've been kidded," said Finney calmly. "When I talked to Hergert, he said he was going to play some kind of joke on some friends of his."

Jerry's brows drew a straight line above his eyes.

"He was going to get a coin from a collection," Finney went on airily, "and tell them he'd found a—"

"Wait a minute!" said Jerry.

There was ugliness naked in his eyes now, a muddy rage that rose above his careful pose of ironic amusement. He moved a step, gathered Finney's lapels into a close, pressing knot at his throat. He almost lifted Finney from his feet with one corded hand.

"For a minute you had me fooled," he said.

"Let go my coat," said Finney.

"Forget Hergert," Jerry said. "You're dealin' with us now! We want that gold, and we're going to get it. You can play nice and show us where it is, or we'll find a way to get it ourselves."

Finney said, "Let go my coat."

The man let go, so suddenly Professor Finney almost tumbled over on the deserted platform. For a moment the two men stood face to face, and their eyes clashed in fury. Then Jerry lifted a hand sharply and thrust it down in a gesture of annihilation.

"Take it the hard way then," he said.

ON THE five-minute walk from the bus stop to his cottage, Professor Finney thought of a number of unusual synonyms for "idiot," all applied to himself. He plodded doggedly along the deserted stretch of sidewalk without looking back, feeling behind him the presence of Jerry, tall and menacing in the westering light. Jerry, who had come into possession of his secret, and proposed to do something about it. He damned himself for trusting Hergert. He wondered whom Jerry's mysterious "we" included.

Out of the welter of his emotions, only one thing was clear and definite. He'd have to keep this news from Matilda. No use having her worried, as long as she'd set her heart on having the treasure. He'd say nothing about Jerry. He'd trust to Providence to find some way out without alarming Matilda until it was all over.

He closed the cottage door behind him, and Matilda said, "Professor, what's the matter?"

"Matter?" Finney said vaguely.

"Don't try to fool me," said his wife. "You're in trouble of some kind. You're white as a rabbit."

Professor Finney looked into the hall mirror with elaborate unconcern. "Really, my dear—"

His wife said in exasperation, "I've been married to you for twenty-six years. Don't you think I've learned anything in that time? Somebody's upset you. You're mad and you're a little bit worried. Now, what's the matter?"

Finney sighed. "It's Jerry," he said.

"Who's Jerry? What does he want?"

"He wants the treasure," said Finney.

Her eyes sparkled angrily. "Did you tell him about it?"

The truth came out then, the whole story of his visit to Hergert, and Jerry's appearance a day later. Matilda listened in grim silence to the bitter end, then:

"That Hergert ought to be whipped!"

"But Matilda," protested Professor Finney, "the man is an academician. He's a brother professor. I'm reluctant to think he would consort with low characters like this Jerry. Why, people would stop speaking to him!"

"What do you think he wanted the coin for?" said his wife. "So he could prove to these cutthroats there really was a treasure. He planned to steal it from us, right from the start!"

"But he seemed happy with the coin."

"If you knew there was a million dollars for the taking, would you be happy with one coin?" asked Matilda.

"By George!" Finney said. "I'll call the police!"

"Get this through your head," she said. "This is treasure trove. It belongs to anybody who gets it. The fewer people know about it, the better."

"But the police—"

"Would be as bad as Hergert, if not worse. We've got to work this out ourselves."

"Sometimes I wish I'd never seen the darned old gold," said Professor Finney. "Matilda, couldn't we just forget the whole thing?"

"Let a million dollars go to waste!"

"Well—leave it for a while, till these men forget about it. After all, it's been there for three hundred fifty years now. A few more years won't hurt."

"You're forgetting," his wife said practically, "that they know it's there now. They won't rest till they get it. If we don't get it now, we never will."

A slow anger began to rise in Finney—a wrath that so pleasant a thing as finding a million dollars could be complicated by unscrupulous men. What had started out so delightfully was now becoming fraught with peril and woe. And all on account of that miserable Hergert. Asking for the gold doubloon, and planning all the time to steal—yes, steal!—the entire treasure.

Still in the unfamiliar grip of fury, Professor Finney picked up his hat and turned toward the door. Then, struck by a sudden idea, he stopped. His wife's plain features were tender with understanding.

"Go ahead," she said. "I'll be all right."

Professor Finney colored. He had never become accustomed to the way his wife had of reading his thoughts exactly.

"But Jerry," he said. "A most uncouth person."

"Pooh," said Matilda inelegantly.

"Really," said Finney. "He's quite rough."

"I'll handle him all right," said Matilda. "You get on over to Hergert's and give him a piece of your mind. Get that coin back, too."

"By George!" said Finney. "I just happened to think—Jerry'll follow me. You won't have to worry on that account. He'll be following me."

Matilda looked a shade disappointed, but she said only, "Don't let 'em talk you into anything."

PROFESSOR FINNEY'S guess was right. He had gone barely a block before he became aware of the tall Jerry swinging along behind him. Darkness had come, and the infrequent streetlights of Los Gatos brought his shadow to travel before him, growing with each stride until it marched, enormous and strange, down the sidewalk ahead. At the shadow's greatest length, another blackness would come alongside, from far behind, to keep steady pace until the light ahead turned both shadows backward.

Two blocks ahead Finney could hear the bus to the city growling up the long hill into Los Gatos. He judged its position with an expertness born of long custom, and a sudden inspiration came to him. He would have time to make it easily if he sprinted the last half block. Hold it steady, he told himself. Pull ahead of him slowly, so he won't suspect anything. Easy—wait for the last possible minute. Now! Run for it!

He heard Jerry's angry shout; heard the heavy pound of his feet behind as he took up the chase. But Finney had been too careful in his calculations. He made the bus in a final desperate dash for the moving steps, and the broken-nosed man was a good half-block too late. Finney gave the driver one of his commutation tickets, and sat down with a smug feeling that stayed with him all the way into town. Now at least he'd meet Hergert on even terms, without Jerry to upset the balance.

Hergert's house was on a quiet residential street on the other side of the city. He lived alone, Finney recalled, with a housekeeper who came in during the day. She'd be gone now—there'd be no intrusion on his talk. Finney wondered hopefully about punching Hergert in the nose. The more he thought about that idea, the better he liked it. He'd go in, give the little sneak a mild drubbing, then order him to call off his thugs.

That was the place. Light was streaming from the open front door, and Finney approached warily. He went in finally, into the lighted living room.

"Professor Hergert!" he called sternly.

There was no answer. Finney looked into the empty kitchen, then went through an arched doorway where there were three doors. Bathroom, empty. Bedroom—and Hergert lay relaxed across the bed.

Finney said, "Get up, Hergert."

He said, "Come on, stop stalling!"

Then he said, "My God, man!"

For Hergert was dead. Finney's hand felt the coldness of him as he touched a shoulder. Then, even in the dim light, he saw the neat round hole in Hergert's forehead, with a blackened ring around it. It took no previous knowledge to tell him it was a bullet wound, and he rightly judged the blackened ring to indicate that the bullet had been fired at point-blank range.

Sudden realization came over him, bringing a giddy sickness in its wake. In all the half-century of his life, this was the first time he had ever seen violent death. Certainly it was the first time he had been actively connected with it.

The pattern here was not obscure. Hergert had told these men about the treasure. By so doing he had ended his own usefulness to them. Finney could almost follow their reasoning word for word. "If he's alive, he might tell somebody else. Dead, we don't have to cut him in for a share."

Somewhere in Finney there was pity for this smug little man with the wisp of moustache. His good, trained mind, adequate for his own job, had been pulled from its accustomed sphere by the lure

of a shining gold coin—pulled into contact with a raw and violent world that lay beneath the surface of the orderly face of life. And death had been waiting there; an end to everything.

Now Finney's satisfaction over having shaken Jerry at the bus, was gone, lost in a frantic wash of fear at having left the man at Los Gatos. A murderer, or one of a murderer's crew, and Matilda defenseless and alone. Suppose Jerry were to decide that Matilda knew the location of the treasure. Suppose he tried to make her tell. On an impulse, Finney bent to look at Hergert's hand, limp above his head. The finger ends were burned. Finney's breath became a shrill gasp.

The doorbell rang then. Its shrill clamor cut through the stillness within the house. While Finney stood petrified, there was a thunderous knocking, and a hoarse voice called:

"All right, you! Come on out!"

TO EVEN the most finely disciplined minds there comes occasionally a species of madness, an out-of-control interval that leaves the mind's owner gasping in the swift development of events that seem beyond reason or correction. And now it was Professor Finney's turn. He could think of only one thing—that he was trapped, caught in his enemy's house by the side of his enemy's body, and that the police were at the door.

He slipped behind the bedroom door, tense and wary as the solid clump of footsteps came through the living room of the little house. Something compact was in the path of his foot, and he bent to pick up a small automatic from the rug. He gripped it by the butt, still and frightened in the shadows, as the footsteps came back from the kitchen and into the hall.

Professor Finney felt a mild satisfaction in the fact that the investigator was following his exact steps. It comforted him, somehow, to know that he had looked in the logical places, as a professional would. Then his arm stiffened and raised, for the steps were coming in to the bedroom where he stood concealed. A flashlight cut a trail into the darkness of the room, and found Hergert's still body.

"Wake up, Mac," the hoarse voice said. "That open door of yours is ruinin' the dim-out."

Air raid warden! Relief was a spasm in Finney's mind, and it was the relief in him that spoke before he could consider.

"Sorry," he said, "we'll shut it."

The light swiveled to strike him, and the warden said, "Hey, what are you doin' behind the door? Why, you got a gun! What's goin'—"

Finney struck down desperately, and the gun barrel clanged on a Civilian Defense helmet. The man staggered back, then turned and fled. His whistle shrilled at the door, and he was gone down the street, with his whistle and his hoarse voice alternately sounding the alarm.

Professor Finney moved now with desperate haste. He stuffed the little gun in his pocket, closed the door to the bedroom, and went out into the lighted living room. His hand was on the light switch when he saw the telephone directory lying open on the table. Memory brought him a picture of Hergert, in his office, carefully underlining a number with his sharp thumbnail.

Finney picked up the directory and slanted it toward the light. There it was, a groove plainly drawn under the name of William Gardner, Laguna Vista apartments. Finney closed the directory, flicked the light switch and went out the door into the darkness.

There was clamor to the left, a growing spate of excited voices, and dimly in the distance the throaty hum of a squad car siren. Finney ran to the right, dodging across lawns and down side streets until the tumult dimmed far behind him. He went on until the lawns and wide-set houses began to give way to clumps of store buildings and apartment houses. Then he stopped at a tiny lunch counter.

A plan was forming in his mind now, a grim resolve to carry the war to the enemy. He knew, in view of what had happened to Hergert, that there could be no safety for Matilda and him while Jerry and his gang remained. The gang would have to be destroyed. And Professor Finney thought he knew a way to gain the upper hand now—a way to bring the murderous crew to terms.

Finney had selected the lunchroom because it had a phone booth. He dialed William Gardner's number, and waited patiently while the line buzzed. Finally a thin, cautious voice answered.

"I want to speak to Jerry," Finney said.

There was a little pause. "Who's talkin'?"

"This is Professor Finney."

There was another pause, longer this time, and a new voice came on the line, a crisp voice with a feel of power in its tones.

"What's all this?" it said.

"I want to speak to Jerry," said the professor firmly. "He's been following me around all day, and I don't like it."

"Jerry isn't here." There was faint amusement in the heavy voice. "Look behind you, maybe he's there."

"Now see here," Finney said. "I don't want any more of this foolishness. I know what you're after, and you aren't going to get it. And if you don't stop annoying me, I'm going to cause trouble."

"You're scaring me," mocked the voice.

"By George," said Finney, "I'd like to punch your nose."

"Why not?" said the voice. "You know my address."

"I'll be right over!"

"Where are you now? I'll send for you."

Finney hung up angrily and thumbed through the classified directory. The Laguna Vista apartments were on the far side of town, an hour and a half by bus. He hesitated a moment, and dialed the number again.

The heavy, pleasant voice answered immediately.

"I'm in a hamburger stand on Eighty-third and Naylor," said Finney. "But don't think just because you come after me that I'm not going to punch your nose."

The voice said, "Wait there."

IT WAS two hamburgers later that the smart green car came to a stop in front of the lunchroom, and a small man got out. He wore a cloth cap, and came into the little eatery with an obvious limp. His lips were thin, and moved very little as he asked: "You the perfessor?"

His voice was thin and gusty, and Finney thought it might be the first voice he had heard on the phone. He said, "What about it?"

"Come on," said the little man.

"Why should I?"

The small man swept his cap to the back of his head in a gesture of frustration. "For the luvva— Didn't you just call the boss?"

Finney was beginning to enjoy himself. "I spoke to someone on the phone who was to send a car for me. How do I know you're the right person?"

The counterman had been edging closer, and the small man in the cloth cap sent him a lambent scowl of hatred. "Get back to your horsemeat, jockey!" he snarled. "An' you, Perfessor, get the lead out!"

Suddenly, magically, a gun was in the little man's hand. It had leaped there; it flickered like a snake's tongue. The counterman gasped just once and went down behind the service bar. It was then that Finney saw the pinpoint pupils of the little man's eyes. It was then he realized he had chosen a poor time to be facetious. He got off his stool without another word, and preceded the little man into the car at the curb.

There was another man in the car, in the driver's seat. As soon as the door slammed, the car was in motion, and as the acceleration pressed Finney back into the seat the little man leaned over and deftly took the gun from his coat pocket. They rode in silence then, through the heavy city traffic, and out a spacious boulevard to the Laguna Vista apartments. It was an expensive looking building, complete with doorman, marquee, and rich exterior. A uniformed elevator girl took them to the penthouse.

Some of Finney's assurance began to leave him as they entered the huge apartment at the top of the Laguna Vista. It was so obviously a place of wealth, a solidly entrenched dwelling where murderers lived. Finney began to wonder if that "Crime does not pay" business was all to the good. The evidence seemed to the contrary.

The entrance hall and living room were luxurious, decorated expensively and with

rather good taste. Wide windows gave upon the balcony, and the sea shimmered hazily in the distance. Cool notes of blue dominated the room, and the big man who stood by the radio was dressed in pale blue slacks and jacket. He turned as they came in, and smiled at the professor. Finney was reminded of a shark he had met on one of his diving excursions.

"So you're the professor," the big man said. "You aren't very big to be talking about punching noses."

"I want to talk to Jerry," Finney said.

"Let's get this straight," said the man in blue. "Jerry is an errand boy. He was following you because I told him to. He takes orders from me, just like Moe there, and Charlie the driver. So you want to talk to me?"

"And who the devil are you?"

"I'm Bill Gardner," the man said. "I thought you knew that. You called my phone number."

Finney said, "Your name means nothing to me."

Gardner looked a little bit puzzled. "Maybe I've been giving you credit for being smarter than you really are," he said slowly. "When you called here, I thought maybe we'd run into somebody who knew his way around. How'd you get this number?"

"Never mind that," said Finney. "What I—"

The radio behind Gardner spoke suddenly. "Car number forty-five, go to the corner of Twenty-first and Garrison Court. Hit and run. That is all."

"All right," Gardner said. "We won't worry about how you got the number. Some way, you found out Jerry was one of my men. So you came here."

"To tell you to let me alone."

"Suppose we don't?"

Finney said, "In that case I'll tell the police who killed Professor Hergert. And prove it."

The room got very still, as though everyone had suddenly stopped breathing. The only sound for a tick of time was the faint hum of the radio tuned to the police band. When Finney spoke again, he felt as though he were pushing his voice through a wall of silence.

"You see," he said, "I know you don't dare do anything to me, because I'm the only one who knows where the gold is. It looks to me, Mr. William Gardner, as if I hold all the cards."

The smile remained on Gardner's face, but now it was an utterly savage smile, lean and hungry, making him look more than ever like a shark. His voice dropped to a low-pitched drawl.

"All right," he said. "I'll deal with you."

"Just let me alone," said Finney. "That's all there is to it. You've nothing to deal with."

Gardner said, "We have Mrs. Finney."

PROFESSOR FINNEY sat quietly in one of the blue brocaded chairs and watched Gardner dial the cottage at Los Gatos. It was a complicated process. He dialed at first and let the phone ring twice before hanging up. After a carefully timed interval he dialed again, and let it ring once. Then he called the number for a third time and it was answered.

"Jerry," Gardner said. "Talk to Finney."

Finney took the phone in a nerveless hand from which all the strength seemed to be gone. He shook his head to clear the numbness from his mind, and put the blue enameled instrument to his face.

"Did you think you were pretty smart at the bus?" said Jerry's cold voice. "You made me mad, bud, so I came back and tied your wife to a chair. You better do what the boss says, guy, if you know what's good for you."

"Is she—all right?" Finney breathed.

Jerry said, "So far, she is."

Professor Finney handed back the phone, and rubbed a shaking hand across his eyes. All that he had feared—the horror that had obsessed him ever since he had seen Hergert's body—was real now, black and threatening. And he had no weapon with which to fight, except his knowledge of the treasure's location. That, and the slender bluff of informing the police about Hergert.

He'd always known, he supposed, that there were people in the world like Gardner and his gang—men to whom the lives and possessions of others were of no consequence. But to meet them, to have them

threaten his wife, invade his home, coolly demand the wealth he considered rightfully his—this was something against which an honest man was not equipped to contend.

He said, "Don't let him hurt her."

"You're beginning to talk sense now," Gardner said.

"Promise you won't!"

"She'll be all right," said Gardner, "providing you behave yourself. Otherwise—well, you remember what Moe did for Hergert."

"He was orderin' the boss around," Moe said.

"Hergert thought he was indispensible," Gardner said. "As a matter of fact, as soon as he'd told us about your finding the gold, he became more of a liability than an asset."

Professor Finney fought to hold together the last shreds of his composure. He needed time to marshal his thoughts in the face of this monstrous thing—murder cold and unashamed—murder as a matter of convenience.

"How did you get on Hergert's trail?" he asked.

"Hergert came to me," Gardner said. "He learned about me through a man who had sold him a bootleg tire. In spite of your ignorance, I have a certain standing in some circles." His heavy voice stressed the words.

Finney thought in amazement, "The man is as proud of his record in crime as Hergert was of his professorship!" It was an appalling thought to Finney. He said weakly, "Did you have to kill him?"

"It was the practical thing to do," said Gardner. "Nothing closes a man's mouth so definitely as death. But we're wasting time."

Finney shuddered. "What do you want of me?"

"The treasure," Gardner said simply. "In exchange for your wife's safe return, and your own silence."

"All the treasure?"

"We might consider giving you a—"

The radio interrupted. It had been giving a series of stolen cars, but now a note of animation came into the bored voice of the police announcer. "Attention all cars. Be on the lookout for a plump, middle-aged, red-faced man, wearing glasses. Last seen wearing a battered gray hat and a brown checked coat. Wanted for the murder of Professor Theodore Hergert. This man is armed, so use caution. That is all."

"Hey, they're all balled up—" Moe began.

Gardner's upraised hand stopped him. A grin of pure amusement overspread the big man's predatory face. He looked at the brown checks on Finney's coat sleeve, then lifted his eyes to look at the professor's flushed, round face. His face was shining with sudden triumph, and his deep voice was heavy with mastery.

"There goes your hole card," he said.

DAWN was a flimsy gray streak behind the landward hills as the green sedan stopped by the Finney cottage in Los Gatos. The professor got out stiffly, and went into the little house at a stumbling run.

"Matilda! Are you all right?" he called.

His wife answered from the kitchen. "Well, you certainly took your time getting back! I've had that skinny hoodlum tied up for three hours, and—oh!"

Gardner, Moe, and Charlie had come through the door behind her husband. Moe's gun was in his hand, and the little killer's pale eyes were wide and staring. He had been hours without morphine, and his nerves were taut and ill-controlled.

"Very neat, madam," Gardner said. "Where is he?"

"Who are these men," she demanded.

Professor Finney stepped between her and the jumpy little Moe. "It's the rest of the gang," he said. "Matilda, be careful. They're killers."

"Quite correct," said Gardner.

Mrs. Finney's eyes showed a sort of hopelessness. It was the first time she had ever seen her husband show fear. "He's in on the bed," she said listlessly. "I talked him into letting me make coffee, and—"

"Fed him knockout drops," said Gardner. "Madam, you have my compliments. You are a woman of spirit."

"Knockout drops nothing!" snapped Matilda. "Where would I get knockout drops? I lammed him on the head with a piece of stove wood."

It was a sullen and disgusted Jerry whom Charlie untangled from the web of cordage that had held him on the bed. He glared at Mrs. Finney with his mouth working, but said nothing. Gardner took immediate command.

"Your husband is wanted for the killing of Professor Hergert," he told Mrs. Finney. "We have agreed to say nothing about his whereabouts, in return for the gold he found the other day. We are going out at once to salvage it."

"Nonsense!" said Matilda.

Moe growled deep in his throat, an animal sound, and Gardner's restraining hand was almost reluctant. "You have no choice in the matter," he said. "Either we leave here with the treasure, or we shall kill you both. Your husband knows I am not talking idly."

"Boss, she knows where the treasure is," said Jerry.

Gardner's sharklike smile came back. "Excellent, Jerry," he said. "That makes it easier. Women are notoriously susceptible to torture. And her husband would be blamed—we could easily arrange that."

Professor Finney's skin crawled in horror. Thinking of Hergert's fingers, listening to the way Gardner mouthed the word, there could be no doubt of his sincerity.

Quickly, Finney said, "I'll take you to the gold."

Gardner said, "Then let's get at it."

THE launch *Matilda F.* rode deep in the glassy swell, unaccustomed to her heavy human load. Matilda sat in her chair, stony-faced and tight-lipped, with no word for her husband or any of the other men. Gardner began to show excitement as they coasted to the spot where Finney's bearing lines crossed. The lust for gold was in him, the mad unreasoning desire for it that is akin to madness. Finney kept his attention carefully on the engine, not daring to raise his face for fear that a new-springing hope would be apparent.

The anchor went down with a splash and a rattle, and Finney went calmly about the business of checking the compressor engine. He attached his diving helmet. He stripped to his swimming trunks and picked up his net.

Gardner said, "What's that for?"

"There's a lobster down here some place," Finney said. "A brand new species. I thought I might have a chance at him."

"Leave it here," said Gardner. "You'll be busy."

Determination made its pattern on Finney's face. "I won't go down without my net," he said. "You can have the gold, but if I get a chance to catch that lobster I want to do it."

Gardner said, "Get going."

Finney set the helmet on his shoulders and went to the ocean floor. He set off at once, feeling the rhythmic pulse of air that came down to him and dribbled out around his neck to rise in shining bubbles. He felt again competent and important in this familiar scene. The bright life of the sea was around him, and he went sure-footed across the sandy bottom.

Dimly ahead of him a mound took shape, and he knew he was again at the treasure. He squatted down and picked up a half-dozen coins. They were light and unreal in his hand, there under three fathoms. For desire of these, a man had already died. Chances were more than good that Finney and his wife would be killed too, once the treasure had been taken up from its resting place. The quality of mercy, in Gardner and his men, was definitely strained.

Finney, carrying the gold, returned to the launch, ducked out of his helmet, and rose to the ladder.

They watched him gravely and suspiciously as he clambered up onto the after deck of the boat. Something had been going on in his absence—he could feel it in the averted eyes of the men, in the tension that hung over the boat.

Finney handed the coins to Gardner. "I've found it all right," he said. "But I'll need help in the water."

The moment Gardner touched the coins, Finney knew he had judged his man correctly. The coins were like a drug to the big man—with this shining lure he would grant any request.

"What kind of help?" he asked.

"One of your men'll have to come down with me," Finney said. "I've got an extra helmet."

There was a silence over the boat briefly, and in its midst Matilda said clearly, "I saw some betta just now, Professor. Thought you're be interested."

That was it! She'd handed him the answer. For the betta is the Siamese fighting fish, and never seen in these waters. Fighting fish; cannibals. So Gardner and his men were fighting among themselves!

"I'd better take Moe," Finney said.

Moe said despairingly, "But, boss!"

"It's all right," said Gardner. "Give me your gun."

Moe's face twisted under Gardner's steady look, and he handed the automatic over reluctantly.

Finney set the smaller helmet over Moe's slim shoulders. The gunman had stripped to a pair of gaudy silk shorts, showing skin as smooth and white as a woman's. His eyes were wild with fear through the eyepiece, and he went down the ladder slowly, let go with a last despairing look upward.

THE professor dropped easily to the ocean floor beside Moe, took his arm and pointed. They set off toward the treasure. They worked together there in the timeless half-light of the ocean, carrying the gold in net bags to the lifting line of the ship. When Moe began to stumble and flounder, Finney led him back to the shadow of the launch, lifted off his own helmet, then the little gangster's, and took him floundering to the surface.

The others were stowing the gold below, and there was already a small pile of it, deceptively heavy. Gardner was jubilant, and even dour Jerry and Charlie were smiling. Yet back of their pleasure was still the watchful air of suspicion.

The divers rested briefly, sprawled in the hot sun, and this time Moe went willingly into the sea. The pile on the bottom was substantially smaller when they came up for a second rest. Finney could see that the launch rode lower in the water, weighted down by the piled-up coins in the cabin. But now there were only two men and Matilda on the boat.

Quickly, Moe asked, "Where's Charlie?"

Gardner's hand was on his waistband. He answered with a level look at the gunman, "Poor Charlie fell overboard, and drowned before we could get to him. Looks like you've lost a playmate, Moe."

"Why, you dirty—"

"Easy," Gardner said. "We might have to send you down to look for him."

Finney felt a moment's quick frustration. So it had been Charlie and Moe against Jerry and Gardner. He'd had it figured wrong, then. He'd hoped that by taking Moe down he could clear the way for Jerry and Charlie to take care of the more dangerous Gardner. And he'd played into Gardner's hands.

Moe went bravely off the stern of the launch, and set out for the treasure. Finney waited until Moe was dim in the distance before he slipped off his own diving gear and swam upward toward the shadow of the boat.

He broke water silently alongside the *Matilda F.* Gardner was leaning with his back against the low rail. Finney raised his long net, thankful for the noise of the compressor. With an expert swish he settled the net around Gardner's shoulders, then kicked his legs against the side of the launch. Gardner had time for one startled yell before he hit the water.

Finney was waiting for him when he came, and wrapped his arms and legs around the bulky Gardner and sank like a stone. Now he was going to cash in on those years when his dives had been limited by the time he could hold his breath. Now it was Finney's lung power against the field, and it was a good, even match.

Gardner's struggles grew frantic as the seconds ticked away.

On the surface above them Finney could see Jerry's shadow, sprawling and enormous. He could see the geysers lift where Jerry's bullets struck the surface. Then back of Jerry's shadow came another, with one arm swinging down in a mighty arc. Finney shoved Gardner down with a thrust of his legs, and came easily to the surface.

Matilda leaned out across the rail and smiled. "This one's a sucker for a blunt instrument," she said. "How are you doing with yours?"

"Fine," said Finney. "Shoot that gun some more."

Gardner came gently to the surface

beside him then, and Finney dived, tangled his legs in the big man's legs, and drove downward with sweeping arms. He felt the man grow slack, and he knew the fight was over. It was time to pull him out now. Finney figured there'd be help by now. Gunfire doesn't go unnoticed off the coast these days.

The Coast Guard cutter was within hailing distance as Finney came to the surface again, and shortly he was back on the *Matilda F.* answering Lieutenant Bowlin's questions while a brawny CeeGee applied rough respiration to the half-drowned Gardner. When Jerry and Gardner were bound, and the startled Moe pulled bodily from the deep by his airline, Finney picked up his helmet.

"There's another one down there, dead," he said. "You might as well have him too, Lieutenant. It isn't quite a Jap sub, but it's as tough a gang of murderers as you'll have a chance at.

Bowlin said, "Now don't rub it in, Professor."

Finney paused and looked at Matilda. "We made a mistake not telling the lieutenant about that treasure, to begin with, Matilda. We might have known we could trust the Coast Guard."

"Somebody else you'd better take into your confidence," Bowlin said, "is the Treasury Department!"

Professor Finney found the body about where he had expected, tumbling gently across a forest of undersea growth. He put the line around it and started back, towing it through the water behind him. The mound where the treasure had been was gone now. He saw a scattered coin or two, but did not stop to pick them up. He was surprised that he felt no more elation about the whole affair. It was all over now—the gold was safe, Gardner and his men would stand trial for their two murders. And still it didn't seem to mean much.

He had reached the shadow of the boat again before he looked back. There was something like a dark shadow across the dead man's face. For a second Finney stared at it in amazement. Then he reached over easily, and caught the long-pursued lobster back of the claws. He came to the surface, and Matilda took in the situation at a glance.

"I've always told you to use bait," she said.

SOMETHING like a month had passed. Finney came wearily into the little cottage at Los Gatos. He threw his battered felt hat at a hook and sat down.

"I wish we'd settled out of court," he said.

His wife looked up from the paper-littered table.

"We lost?"

He nodded. "It's an old law, but it's never been repealed. Half of any treasure trove goes to the state."

"Anyway, it leaves us only half a million on which to pay income tax," said his wife. "Let's see, that's—wait a minute—that leaves us one hundred twenty thousand dollars."

"You're forgetting the court costs and lawyer's fee," he said gloomily. "Take them off and we've got thirty-two thousand dollars."

"You're forgetting the State income tax," said Matilda. "Take away thirty thousand, we've got two thousand."

They stared at each other. "What was the cost of that diver's outfit you wanted?" she asked.

"Two thousand dollars," he said.

She sighed. "Well, get it."

"No," said Professor Finney. He patted the little bulletin that had come from the Museum of Natural History that morning, describing the new lobster, *Homarus Finnius*. "No," he repeated. "I'm a little tired of diving. I'll buy a new welder's hood, and we'll put the rest in War Bonds."

"WHAT would I do if I found a million dollars?" the gray-haired man at the bar repeated. "Brother, I'd pay my bills."

The round-faced little man at the end of the bar finished his lemon pop in one gulp. "You can say that again," he said clearly, and walked out.

The gray-haired man jerked an inquiring thumb. "Who was that guy?" he asked the barman.

"He's a welder at Lockheed," said the bartender. "I heard those guys make real good dough."

PICKING Your own POCKET

by FRANK WRENTMORE

It's the most popular racket in the world and the only victim is —you! Are you robbing yourself without knowing it? Read this article and find out.

(This is the 270th in a series of articles by Mr. Wrentmore, nation-wide authority on swindles and frauds. All information compiled herein has been taken from the files of authorized legal, financial and commercial associations. The Editor)

VANISHING RACKETS

DESPITE the fact that the war has bred a few petty rackets of its own and has stepped up to some extent the operation of local charity chiselers, on the other hand it has caused the disappearance of a number of well-intrenched business frauds—and some others are on the way out.

Take the phoney auctions, for example. When the Army took over the resort hotels in Atlantic City and Southern resorts the gyp auctions along the boardwalk put up their shutters and closed the joints for the duration. The soft, well-upholstered customers went home to invest their surplus in War Bonds, I hope, or maybe exert themselves by patrolling an air raid warden's beat. Soldiers in training have no time to hang around all the afternoon and pay five or six hundred dollars for an imitation Oriental rug or a buckeye painting.

Their craving for art is easily satisfied with a few well-proportioned pin-up girls by Petty or Varga.

New York City followed suit. The "grind" auctions around Broadway and Forty-second Street which had been selling recased watches and zircons for several times their value found their licenses revoked, their shills and cappers studying 1-A cards and the sources of their slum or flash merchandise dried up. The manufacturers of this junk were doing useful war work at last. Exit the auctions.

Just before we got into the war in 1941 and when the ogre of inflation was beginning to show its teeth, a presidential edict empowered the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to enforce a government order which is known simply as Regulation W. But that regulation upset a myriad of rackets which have cost the American people millions of dollars plus untold grief.

Regulation W controls installment selling—and it needs control badly. From the days when customers "borrowed" furniture from storekeepers until it was fully paid for—"borgen" was the German equivalent for "borrow," which was subsequently corrupted into "borax"—the installment business has been shot with rackets and petty thievery. Once you crossed the threshold of a borax furniture

store it was almost impossible to leave without buying. An elaborate system was built up to cheat and defraud customers. The salesmen even had a language code which no customer could understand. "Show Mrs. Smith those number four bedroom suites," when uttered by the man at the door to the salesman whose "up" it was, simply meant "Charge this customer four times the cost prices."

Price tags were never marked in plain figures, so the customer could confirm the price quoted by the salesman. Code letters indicated the cost and this cost was multiplied by three, four, or sometimes five, by the salesman. This practice left plenty of room for a reduction in price by the "manager" (another salesman) if the customer was "turned over" when she balked at the high prices.

"Mrs. Smith is interested in this number four suite, Mr. Schlag," the salesman would explain, "but she thinks the price is high." Then Mr. Schlag would go to work and if he made a sale the commission would be split between the two.

A purchase was generally an invitation to trouble. If the customer could be induced to sign a conditional sales contract in blank the store would deliver some furniture—often not the pieces selected—and charge what they liked. When the customer refused to pay there was a quick repossession, the loss of the down payment, and the furniture went out to another customer.

Another favorite trick is the "add on." After the customer has bought several hundred dollars' worth of goods and has had them for a few months she may be induced to buy more some day when she stops in the store to make a payment on her account—say, a couple of hundred dollars worth more. Although this is a separate purchase it is "added on" to the original bill. If the customer doesn't pay promptly the store repossesses *all* of the merchandise, not merely the last purchase.

WHEN the purchase of automobiles on the installment plan became widespread, new tricks were devised, frequently through connivance between unscrupulous sellers and finance companies. The "pack" appeared. This was a hidden amount in the finance charge and was returned to the dealer by the finance company who collected it from the customer. If the legitimate charge was $75 the customer might be charged $175—$100 being kicked back to the dealer.

"Balloon notes" were another device. A balloon note is usually the last one to be paid. If the monthly payment is $25, the balloon note may be for $300—the equivalent of an entire year's payment. But the customer frequently wasn't aware of the balloon note's existence until it fell due. If it wasn't paid, his car was repossessed.

Well, Regulation W changes much of this. By requiring the customer to pay at least twenty per cent of the purchase price down, it has curbed wide-spread installment buying. The establishment of ceiling prices has checked some of the chiselers who formerly concealed *all* prices from the customer. But the healthiest action of all is a movement by the legitimate installment sellers themselves to prevent a return of the old conditions after the war.

The New York Conference on Installment Selling not only had new laws passed—now in effect—which force all installment sellers to provide buyers with itemized bills which fully disclose every charge included in their bill—financing, tax, insurance, etc.—but they have also prepared a model set of forms—conditional sales contracts, chattel mortgages, guarantees—which fully protect buyers against many of the wiles of the borax dealers. A Massachusetts legislative committee which was appointed to study what New York has accomplished, recommended:

"A definite program should be undertaken and followed through by representatives of the major retail trades and financing agencies in Massachusetts, the businesses of which involve installment sales, emulating the purpose and objects of the New York Conference on Installment Selling, namely, education, fair laws, self-regulation and the adoption of clear and just forms of contracts and agreements."

This may come under the head of education—which is the tenet of this series of articles—but until your state adopts some protective laws it will be wise for you to scrutinize very closely any papers you may be asked to sign when you buy something on the installment plan.

ILLUSTRATED

The CASE of the CARELESS CONSTABLE

ON MAY 27, 1926, THE MAILMAN STOPPED AT THE "THREE LAKES TAVERN" NORTH OF MUSKEGON, MICH., AND DELIVERED A PACKAGE TO AUGUST KRUBAECH, ITS PROPRIETOR & RECENTLY ELECTED TOWN SUPERVISOR.

KRUBAECH, WATCHED BY HIS DAUGHTER JEANETTE & HER FIANCE, WILLIAM FRANCKE, STARTED TO OPEN IT AS TWO CUSTOMERS LEFT. A MOMENT LATER THEY WERE KNOCKED FLAT BY A TERRIFIC BLAST WHICH WRECKED THE TAVERN & KILLED THE 3 LEFT INSIDE.

SHERIFF LYMAN T. COVELL, CONSTABLE ASA K. BARTLETT STOOD UNTIL POSTAL INSPECTORS ARRIVED TO SIFT THE RUBBLE WHICH YIELDED BITS OF A FLASHLIGHT BATTERY, SHOTGUN SHELL, CIGAR BOX, LEAD SLUGS, WIRE & NAILS--TOGETHER WITH THE SCORCHED PACKAGE LABEL BEARING THE RETURN ADDRESS OF CHARLES GREEN, THE TAVERN-KEEPER'S SON-IN-LAW.

THE BOMB, EXPERTS STATED, WAS HOME-MADE BY A SKILLED MECHANIC WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF EXPLOSIVES, & SET OFF BY THE FIRING MECHANISM OF A SHOT GUN, LATER TAKEN FROM KRUBAECH'S CHEST

9318—DET. FICTION—98-67

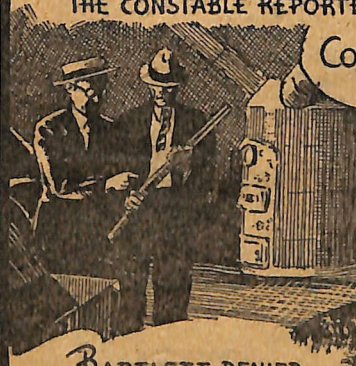
... CRIMES

by LEE + BEN NELSON

"I MOVED FROM THAT ADDRESS A MONTH AGO." GREEN SAID, DENYING KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRIME. "SOMEBODY DIDN'T KEEP HIS ADDRESS BOOK UP TO DATE." THE LABEL HAD BEEN WRITTEN IN A DISGUISED HAND, OBVIOUSLY NOT HIS OWN.

SHERIFF COVELL, LEARNING A SECRET UNDERGROUND TERRORIST SOCIETY HAD THREATENED KRUBAECH'S LIFE IN OPPOSING HIS ELECTION, ASSIGNED CONSTABLE BARTLETT TO LOCATE A SHOTGUN WITH MISSING FIRING MECHANISM.

THE CONSTABLE REPORTED FAILURE — NOT SO THE POSTAL INSPECTORS.



CONSTABLE BARTLETT, THEY DISCOVERED, HAD ONCE WORKED WITH EXPLOSIVES, HAD PURCHASED SIMILAR LABELS. HIS NOTEBOOK REVEALED CHARLES GREEN'S OLD ADDRESS IN HANDWRITING LIKE THAT ON THE LABEL. FURTHERMORE, IT SEEMED, HE WAS HEAD OF THE SECRET POLITICAL OPPOSITION.

BARTLETT DENIED ALL, EVEN WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE SHOTGUN FOUND IN HIS CELLAR, FROM WHICH THE BOMB'S FIRING MECHANISM HAD COME.

BUT WHEN THE TRIPLE FUNERAL CORTEGE PASSED, SHERIFF COVELL CRIED: "THATS YOUR WORK! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT NOW?"

BARTLETT'S IRON NERVE BROKE & HE CONFESSED. HE WAS SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR LIFE, MICHIGAN, UNFORTUNATELY, HAVING NO DEATH PENALTY.

Brooding, malign, the League of the Faceless Men close their final death trap, as the Saint makes his last grim tryst with trackless murder in the night!

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

SIMON TEMPLAR had seen some very strange sights in his career of tracking down criminals and crime of highly specialized sorts. But never had he come across so strange a picture as that of the incinerated tree that talked!

The charred object which lay across the road on which Simon Templar, known also as the Saint, was driving, muttered a few words which proved it had once been a man. His own name—Henry Stephens—the name of a place, the Blue Goose—the name of a woman, Olga—and the names of the dreadful criminals who had made him into a human torch.

And then muttering something about an ostrich-skin leather case, the murdered man had died.

Olga Ivanovitch turned out to be a hostess at the Blue Goose, a night spot. She had known the murdered man as Henry Stephens Matson, but her seeming innocence was suspicious in itself. Her personal interest in the Saint might be a clever trap.

Conclusion

The Saint trailed the three the dying man had accused. Blatt, Weinbach and Maris. Local political skullduggery made it important to "cover up" the Blue Goose, and it must now somehow be proved that the murder of Stephens was a "suicide" —unless the Saint could be somehow implicated as the murderer.

The Saint published an article accusing the three "merchants of Death", in a local paper, and was rewarded by contact from

THE SAINT IN TROUBLE

By LESLIE CHARTERIS

The knife flew from the Saint's hand in a glittering streak.

an informer, Nick Vaschetti. The informer suddenly died violently, but not until he had identified Blatt and Weinbach as Nazi agents. That left only one "faceless man" to run down—Maris.

No one had ever seen Maris. Could the Saint track him down before either the politically-minded local guardian of the Law, police lieutenant Kinglake, blotted him out—or the Nazis "got" him as they had Vaschetti?

CHAPTER NINE

"You Asked for It, Templar!"

THE links went clicking through Simon's brain as if they were meshing over the teeth of a perfectly fitted sprocket.

The ungodly had ransacked his room at the Alamo House while they knew he would be out of the way, and had drawn

a blank. But they would have had plenty of time to pick him up again, and it would have been childishly simple for them to do it, because they knew he was with Olga Ivanovitch, and the place where she was going to steer him for dinner had been decided in advance.

The Saint had been alert for the kind of ambuscade that would have been orchestrated with explosions and flying lead, but not for ordinary trailing, because why should the ungodly trail him when one of them was already with him to note all his movements? He had left Olga Ivanovitch, on one occasion in his car outside the *Star-Item* building, as he said, for a front and a cover. It hadn't occurred to him that she might be a front and a cover for others of the ungodly.

She had sat there covering the front while they took the precaution of covering the other exits. When he came out by the back alley, they followed. When he went to the city jail, they remembered Vaschetti and knew that that must have been the man he had gone to see. Therefore one of them had waited for a chance to silence Vaschetti and when Vaschetti was released and led back to the Campeche the opportunity had been thrown into their laps. It had been as mechanically simple as that.

Olga Ivanovitch had done a swell job all the way through.

All those items went interlocking through his mind as he stood at the desk inside and faced an assistant manager who was trying somewhat flabbily to look as though he had everything under perfect control.

Simon flipped his lapel in a conventional gesture, but without showing anything, and said aggressively, "Police Department. What room was Vaschetti in?"

"Eight-twelve," said the assistant manager, in the accents of a harassed mortician. "The house detective is up there now. I assure you, we—"

"Who was with him when he jumped?"

"No one that I know of. He was brought in by one of the men from the *Star-Item,* who redeemed his check. Then the reporter left, and—"

"He didn't have any visitors after that?"

"No, nobody asked for him. I'm sure of that, because I was standing by the desk all the time. I'd just taken the money for his check, and told Mr. Vaschetti that we'd like to have his room in the morning. I was chatting with a friend of mine—"

"Where are the elevators?"

"Over in that corner. I'll be glad to take you up, Mr.—"

"Thanks. I can still push my own buttons," said the Saint brusquely. He headed away in the direction indicated, leaving the assistant manager with only one more truncated sentence in his script.

The Saint had very little time to spare, if any. It could be only a matter of seconds before the accredited constabulary would arrive on the scene, and he wanted to verify what he could before they were in his hair.

He went up and found 812, where the house detective could be seen through the open door, surveying the scene with his hands in his pockets and a dead piece of chewing cigar in the corner of his mouth.

Simon shouldered in with exactly the same authoritative technique and motion of a hand towards the flap of his buttonhole.

"What's the bad news?" he demanded breezily.

The house detective kept his hands in his pockets and made a speech with his shoulders and the protruding cud of his cigar that said as eloquently as anything, "You got eyes, ain'tcha?"

Simon fished out a pack of cigarettes and let his own eyes do the work.

It didn't take more than one wandering glance to rub in the certainty that he was still running behind schedule. Although not exactly a shambles, the room showed all the signs of a sound working over. The bed was torn apart, and the mattress had been slit open in several places, as had the upholstery of the single armchair.

The closet door stood wide, and the few garments inside had been ripped to pieces and tossed on the floor. Every drawer of the dresser had been pulled out, and its contents dumped and pawed over on the carpet. The spectacle was reminiscent of the Saint's own room at the Alamo House—with trimmings. He wouldn't have wasted a second on any

searching of his own. The search had already been made, by experts.

So someone already had Vaschetti's diary, or else no one was likely to come across it there.

The Saint scraped a match with his thumbnail and let the picture shroud itself in a blue haze.

"What about the men who were up here with Vaschetti?" he asked.

"I never saw anyone with him," responded the house dick promptly.

He had a broad beam and an advancing stomach, so that he had some of the air of a frog standing upright.

"I didn't get your name," he said. "Mine's Rowden."

"You didn't hear any commotion up here, Rowden?"

"I didn't hear a thing. Not until the crash Vaschetti made going through the marquee. I didn't even know he was back out of jail until just now. Where's Kinglake? He usually comes out on death cases."

"He'll be along," Simon promised, with conviction.

THERE was one fascinating detail to consider, Simon observed as he narrowed down the broad outlines of the scene. In the middle of the strewn junk on the floor there was an almost new gladstone bag, empty and open, lying on its side. He moved to examine it more closely.

"Anybody else been up here?" he inquired.

"Nope. You're the first. Funny I don't know you. I thought I'd met all the plain-clothes men in town."

"Maybe you have," said the Saint encouragingly.

Indubitably that was the gladstone which he had heard about. It even had the initials "HSM" gold-stamped beside the handle. But if there had ever been an ostrich-skin leather case in the lining, it wasn't there any more. The lining had been slashed to ribbons, and you could have found a long-lost pin in it.

It was a picturesque mystery-museum piece, but that was all. The current questions were, how had it come to rest there, and why? Johan Blatt had removed it from the Ascot, and by no stretch of imagination could his description have been confused with that of the latest failure in the field of empirical levitation. Vaschetti and Blatt were even more different than chalk and cheese: they didn't even begin with the same letter.

Simon Templar pondered that intensely for a time, while the house detective teetered batrachianly on his heels and gnawed on his bowsprit of cigar. The house detective, Simon thought, would surely have been a big help in detecting a house. Aside from that, he was evidently content to let nature and the Police Department take their course. He would have made Dick Tracy break out in a rectangular rash.

They remained in that sterile atmosphere until the sound of voices and footsteps in the corridor, swelling rapidly louder, presaged the advent of Lieutenant Kinglake and his cohorts.

"Ah," said Detective Yard wisely, as he sighted the Saint.

Kinglake didn't even take time out to show surprise. He turned savagely on the frog-shaped house detective.

"How in hell did this bird get in here?"

"I came in under my own power," Simon intervened. "I was thinking of moving, and I wanted to see what the rooms were like. Don't blame Rowden. He was trying to tell me about the wooden mattresses. If you look again, you'll see where he was even ripping them open to show me the teak linings."

The lieutenant was not amused. He had never looked like a man who was amused very often, and this was manifestly not one of his nights to relax in a bubble bath of wit and badinage.

He glared at the Saint balefully and said, "All right, Templar. You asked for it. I told you what was going to happen to you if you didn't keep your nose clean in this town. Well, this is it. I'm holding you as a material witness in the death of Nick Vaschetti."

The arch of the Saint's brows was angelic.

"As a witness of what, comrade? The guy bumped himself off, didn't he? He stepped out of a window and left off his parachute. He knew that the most precious legacy he could bequeath the police was an absolutely watertight suicide.

What makes you leave your everloving wife so you can come here and improve your blood-pressure?"

Kinglake's mouth became a thin slit in his face, and his neck reddened up to his ears, but he kept his temper miraculously. The blood stayed out of his slate-gray stare.

"Why don't you save the wisecracks for your column?" he said nastily. "You've been mixed up in too many fishy things since you've been here—"

"What makes you assume that I was mixed up in this?"

"You talked to Vaschetti in the city jail this evening. You arranged for him to be sprung, and you arranged to meet him here. I call that being mixed up in it."

"You must be psychic," Simon remarked. "I know I got rid of your Mr. Callahan. Or who told you?"

"I did," said the voice of the *Star-Item.*

He stood in the doorway with a vestige of apology on his mild, stolid face. Simon turned and saw him, and went on looking at him with acid bitterness.

"Thanks, pal. Did you bring out a special edition and tell the rest of the world, too?"

"I did not," said the city editor primly. "I acted according to the agreement I made with you, as soon as I heard what had happened to Vaschetti."

"How did you hear?"

"The reporter who was supposed to be taking care of him and waiting for you arrived back at the office. I asked him what he thought he was doing, and he said he'd been given a message that I wanted him back at once. Since I hadn't sent any such message, I guessed something was going on. I wasn't any too happy about my own position, so I thought I'd better come over and look into it myself. I met Lieutenant Kinglake downstairs, and I told him what I knew."

"And so we come up here," Kinglake said comfortably, "and catch the Saint just like this."

The repetition of names ultimately made its impression on the comatose house detective.

"Gosh," he exhaled, with a burst of awed excitement, "he's the Saint!" He looked disappointed when nobody seemed impressed by his great discovery, and retired again behind his cigar. He said sullenly, "He told me he was the police."

"He told the assistant manager the same thing," Kinglake said with some satisfaction. "A charge of impersonating an officer will hold him till we get something better."

Simon studied the lieutenant's leathery face seriously for a moment.

"You know," he said, "something tells me you really mean to be difficult about this."

"You're damn right I do," Kinglake said without spite.

At that point there was a sudden sharp exclamation from Detective Yard, who had been quartering the room with the same plodding method that he had used out on the flats where the late Henry Stephen Matson had become his own funeral pyre.

"Hey, Lieutenant, look what we got here."

He brought over the shredded gladstone, pointing to the initials stamped on it.

"H, S, M," he spelt out proudly. "Henry Stephen Matson. This could of belonged to that guy we found yesterday!"

Lieutenant Kinglake examined the bag minutely, but the Saint wasn't watching him.

Simon Templar had become profoundly interested in something else. He had still been fidgeting over that bag in the back of his mind even while he had to make more immediate conversation, and it seemed to be sorting itself out. He was scanning the hodgepodge of stuff on the floor rather vacantly while Yard burgeoned into the bowers of Theory.

"Lieutenant, maybe this Vaschetti was the guy who called himself Blatt an' got away with Matson's luggage. So after they throw him out the window, they tear that bag apart while they're rippin' up everything else."

"BROTHER," said the Saint in hushed veneration, "I visualize you as the next chief of police. You can see that whole slabs of that lining have been torn right out, but in all this mess I bet you can't find one square

inch of lining. I've been looking to see if the ungodly had been smart enough to think of that, but I don't think they were. Therefore that bag wasn't chopped up in here. Therefore it was planted just for the benefit of some genius like you."

"What else for?" Kinglake demanded.

"To throw in a nice note of confusion. And most likely, in the hope that the confusion might take some of the heat off Blatt."

"If there ever was a Blatt before you thought of him."

"There was a Blatt," the city editor intervened scrupulously. "I think I told you, Vaschetti spoke about him and described him."

The lieutenant handed the gladstone back to his assistant, and kept his stony eyes on the Saint.

"That doesn't make any difference," he stated coldly. "All I care about is that whatever went on here was done inside the city limits. There's no question about my jurisdiction this time. And I'm tired of having you in my hair, Templar. You wanted Vaschetti out of the calaboose. You arranged to meet him here. And I find you in his room in the middle of a mess that makes it look as if he could have been pushed out of that window instead of jumped.

"You've been much too prominent in every bit of this—from finding Matson's body to going around with Olga Ivanovitch. So I'm just going to put you where I'll know what you're doing all the time."

"Has there been a political upheaval in the last half hour," Simon inquired with sword-edged mockery, "or do you happen to be kidding yourself that if you bring me into court on any charge I won't manage to tie this job in with the Matson barbecue and raise holy hell with all the plans for a nice peaceful election?"

Kinglake's jaw hardened out like a cliff, but the harried expression that Simon had noticed before crept in around his eyes.

"We'll worry about that when the time comes. Right now, you're going to do all your hell-raising in a nice quiet cell."

Simon sighed faintly, with real regret. It would have been so much more fun playing it the old way but he couldn't take any more chances with that now. This game mattered so much more than the old games that he had played for fun.

"I hate to disappoint you," he said, "but I can't let you interfere with me tonight."

He said it with such translucent simplicity that it produced the kind of stunned silence that might exist at the very core of an exploding bomb.

Detective Yard, the least sensitive character, was the first to recover.

"Now, ain't that just too bad!" he jeered, advancing on the Saint, and hauling out a pair of handcuffs as he came. But he moved warily because of his own affronted confidence.

Simon didn't even spare him a glance. He was facing Kinglake and nobody else, and all the banter and levity had dropped away from his bearing. It was like a prizefighter in the ring shrugging off his gay and soft silk robe.

"I want five minutes with you alone," he said. "And I mean alone. It'll save you a lot of trouble and grief."

Lieutenant Kinglake was no fool. The hard note of command that had slid into the Saint's voice was pitched in a subtle key that blended with his own harmonics.

He eyed Simon for a long moment, and then he said, "Okay. The rest of you wait outside. Please."

In spite of which, he pulled out his Police Positive and sat down and held it loosely on his knee as the other members of the congregation filed out with their individual expressions of astonishment, disappointment and disgust.

There was perplexity even on Kinglake's rugged, bony face after the door had closed, but he overcame it with his bludgeon bluff of harsh, peremptory speech.

"Well," he said unrelentingly. "Now we're alone, let's have it. But if you were thinking you could pull a fast one if you had me to yourself—just forget it, and save the city a hospital bill."

"I want you to pick up that phone and make a call to Washington," said the Saint, without rancor. "The number is Imperative five, five hundred. Extension five. If you don't know what that means, your local FBI gent will tell you. You'll talk to a voice called Hamilton. After that you're on your own."

Even Kinglake looked as briefly startled as his seamed face could.

"And if I let you talk me into making this call, what good will it do you?"

"I think," said the Saint, "that Hamilton will laugh his head off, but I'm afraid he'll tell you to save that nice quiet cell for somebody else."

The lieutenant gazed at him fixedly for four or five seconds.

Then he reached for the telephone.

Simon Templar germinated another cigarette, and folded into the remnants of an armchair. He paid hardly any attention to the conversation that went on, much less to the revolver that rested for a few more minutes on the detective's lap. That phase of the affair was finished, so far as he was concerned, and he had something else to think about.

He had to make a definite movement to bring himself back to that shabby and dissected room when the receiver clonked back on its bracket, and Kinglake said, with the nearest approach to humanity that Simon had yet heard in his gravel voice, "That's fine. And now what in hell am I going to tell those muggs waiting outside?"

CHAPTER TEN

Death Plays the Blues

THE Saint could string words into barbed wire, but he also knew when and how to be merciful. He smiled at the lieutenant without the slightest trace of malice or gloating. He was purely practical.

"Tell 'em I spilled my guts. Tell 'em I gave you the whole story, which you can't repeat because it's temporarily a war secret and the FBI is taking over anyhow; but of course you knew all about it all the time. Tell 'em I'm just an ambitious amateur trying to butt into something that's too big for him: you scared the daylights out of me, which is all you really wanted to do.

"Tell 'em I folded up like a flower when I tried to sell you my line and you really got tough. So I quit, and you were big-hearted and let me hightail out of here. Make me into any kind of a jerk that suits you, because I don't want the other kind of publicity and you can get credit for the pinch anyway."

"Why didn't you tell me this in the first place?" Kinglake wanted to know, rather petulantly.

"Because I didn't know anything about you, or your political problems. Which were somewhat involved, as it turns out." The Saint was very calmly candid. "After that, I knew even less about your team. I mean guys like Yard and Callahan. This is a small town, as big towns go, and it wouldn't take long for one man's secret to become everybody's rumor. You know how it is. I might not have got very far that way."

Kinglake dragged another of his foul stogies out of his vest pocket, glared at it pessimistically, and finally bit off the end as if he had nerved himself to take a bite of a rotten apple.

"And I always knew you for a crook," he said disconsolately.

The Saint's smile was almost nostalgically dreamy.

"I always was, in a technical sort of way," he said softly. "And I may be again. But there's a war on, and some odd people can find a use for some even odder people. . . . For that matter, there was a time when I thought you might be a crooked cop, which can be worse."

"I guess you know how that is, too," Kinglake said, sourly but sufficiently. "You sounded as if you did."

"I think that's all been said," Simon replied temperately. "We're just playing a new set of rules. For that matter, if I'd been playing some of my old rules, I think I could have found a way to pull a fast one on you, with or without the audience. I could have taken that heater away from you, and made time out of here no matter what you were threatening. I've done it before. I just thought this was the best way tonight."

The lieutenant glanced guiltily at his half-forgotten gun, and stuffed it back into his hip holster.

"Well?" He repeated the word without any of the aggressive implications that he had thrown into it the last time. "Can you feed me any of this story that I'm supposed to have known all along, or should I just go on clamming up because I don't know?"

Simon deliberately reduced his cigarette by the length of two measured inhalations. In between them, he measured the crestfallen lieutenant once more for luck. After that he had no more hesitation.

If he hadn't been able to judge men down to the last things that made them tick, he wouldn't have been what he was or where he was at that instant. He could be wrong often and anywhere, incidentally, but not in the fundamentals of situation and character.

He said quite casually then, as it seemed to him after his decision was made, "It's just one of those stories. . . ."

HE SWUNG a leg over the arm of his chair, pillowed his chin on his knee, and went on through a drift of smoke when he was ready.

"I've got to admit that the theory I set up in the *Star-Item* didn't just spill out of my deductive genius. It was almost ancient history to me. That's what brought me here, and into your hair. The only coincidence I wasn't expecting, and which I didn't even get onto for some time afterward, was that the body I nearly ran over out there in the marshes would turn out to be Henry Stephen Matson—the guy I came here to find."

"What did you want him for?"

"Because he was a saboteur. He worked in two or three war plants where acts of sabotage occurred, although he was never suspected. No gigantic jobs, but good serious sabotage just the same. The FBI found that out when they checked back on him. But the way they got on to him was frankly one of those weird accidents that are always waiting to trip up the most careful villains.

"He had a bad habit of going out and leaving the lights on in his room. About the umpteenth time his landlady had gone up and turned them out, she thought of leaving a note for him about it. But she didn't have a pencil with her, and she didn't see one lying around. So she rummaged about a bit, and found an Eversharp in one of his drawers. She started to write, and then the lead broke. She tried to produce another one, and nothing happened. So she started fiddling with it and unscrewing things, and suddenly the pencil came apart and a lot of stuff fell out of it that certainly couldn't have been the inner workings of an Eversharp.

"She was a bright woman. She managed to put it together again, without blowing herself up, and put it back where she found it, and went out and told the FBI—of course, she knew that Matson was working for a defense plant. But it's a strictly incredible story, and exactly the sort of thing that's always happening."

"One of these days it'll probably happen to you," Kinglake said, but his stern features relaxed in the nearest approximation to a smile that they were capable of.

The Saint grinned.

"It has," he said. . . . "Anyway, Matson had an FBI man working next to him from then on, so he never had a chance to pull anything."

"Why wasn't he arrested?"

"Because if he'd done other jobs in other places, there was a good chance that he had contacts with a general sabotage organization, and that's what we've been trying to get onto for a long time. That's why I went to St. Louis. But before I arrived there, he'd scrammed. I don't think he knew he was being watched. But Quenco was much tougher than anything he'd tackled before. You don't have any minor sabotage in an explosives factory. You just have a loud noise and a large hole in the ground. I think Matson got cold feet and called it a day. But he wasn't a very clever fugitive. I'm not surprised that the mob caught up with him so quickly. He left a trail that a wooden Indian could have followed. I traced him to Baton Rouge in double time, and when I was there I heard from Washington that he'd applied for a passport and given his address as the Ascot Hotel, here. He was afraid that his goose was cooked. It was, too—to a crisp."

"You were figuring on getting into his confidence and finding out what he knew."

"Maybe something like that. If I could have done it. If not, I'd have tried whatever I had to, even to the extent of roasting him myself. Only I'd have done it more slowly. I thought he might have some informative notes written down. A guy like that would be liable to do that sort of thing, just for insurance. Like Vaschetti . . . I want that ostrich-skin

case that was in his gladstone lining, and I want Vaschetti's diary of his trips and meetings. With those two items, we may be able to clean up practically the whole sabotage system from coast to coast."

"What do you mean by 'we'?" Kinglake asked curiously. "I've heard of this Imperative number, but is it a branch of the FBI?"

Simon shook his head.

"It's something much bigger. But don't ask me, and don't ask anyone else. And don't remember that I ever mentioned it."

Kinglake looked at the chewed end of his stogie.

"I just want you to know," he said, "that I had Matson figured as an ordinary gang killing, and that's why I would have let it ride. If I'd known it was anything like this, nobody could have made me lay off."

The Saint nodded.

"I guessed that. That's why I've talked to you. Now we've spent enough time for you to be able to put over your story, and I've got to be moving."

"You know where you're going?"

"Yes." Simon stood up and crushed out his cigarette. "You may hear from me again tonight."

The lieutenant held out his hand and said, "Good luck."

"Thanks," said the Saint, and went out.

Rowden and Yard and the *Star-Item*, standing in a little huddle down the corridor, turned and fanned out to stare at him as he strolled toward them. Then the lieutenant's voice came from the doorway behind him.

"Mr. Templar is leaving. Now you can all come back here."

"You know," Simon said earnestly, to Detective Yard, "I do wish your first name was Scotland."

He sauntered on, leaving his favorite plainclothes man gawping after him like a punch-drunk St. Bernard whose succored victim has refused to take a drink out of its keg.

Kinglake's trephining eyes reamed the blank, questioning faces of his returned antagonists. He clamped his teeth defiantly into his stogie, and drew a deep breath. In that breath, every wisp of the convenient alibi that Simon Templar had suggested was swept away, and he was standing solidly on a big decision of his own.

"If you want to know what we were talking about," he clipped out, "Templar was giving me a stall, and I pretended to fall for it. Now I'm going to see where he takes me. Yard, you can take charge here. I'm going to follow the Saint myself, and I'm going to bust this whole case if it takes me till Christmas."

"But, Lieutenant," protested the dumbfounded Yard, "what about the chief? What about—"

"The chief," Kinglake said shortly, "and the commissioner, and the sheriff, and everybody behind them, can—"

He did not say that they could jump in the lake, or go climb a tree, or perform any of the more usual immolations. It is indeed highly doubtful whether they could have done what the lieutenant said they could do. But Kinglake was not very concerned just then with literal accuracy. He had an objective of his own which mattered a lot more to him, and he left his extraordinary statement fluttering forgotten in the air behind him as he stalked out.

SIMON TEMPLAR was also dominated by one, single idea. The murder of Matson had been unfortunate, but he could exonerate himself from it. The murder of Vaschetti had been still more unfortunate, but the excuses he could make for himself for that were flimsy gauze before his own ruthless self-criticism. But his reaction to that had already reversed itself into a positive driving force that would go on until the skies fell apart—or he did.

For the ungodly to have murdered two men almost under his nose and within split seconds of giving him the precious information that he had to get, was an insolence and an effrontery that he was going to make them wish they had never achieved. The Saint was angry, now, in a reckless, cold savage way, not as he had been when he first went from police headquarters to the offices of the *Star-Item*, but in a way that could only be soothed out in blood.

And now he thought he knew where he was going to find the blood that night.

A taxi took him to the Blue Goose, but this time he didn't need the driver to vouch for him. The doorkeeper remem-

bered him, and let him in at once. He walked through the blue, melodious dimness toward the bar, loose-limbed and altogether at his ease. Yet there were filaments stirring through all the length of him that kept no touch at all with that lazily debonair demeanor.

He caught sight of Olga Ivanovitch sitting at a table with another girl and two obvious wholesale bottle-cap salesmen, but he gave her only a casual wave and went on to find a stool at the bar. He knew she would join him, and he waited good-humoredly while the brawny blond bartender worked over complicated mixtures for a complicated quartet at the other end of the counter.

Then she was beside him, and he knew it by the perfume she used and the cool satin of her hand before he looked at her.

"I'm glad you got here," she said. "Did you get your job done?"

She was exactly the same, lovely and docile, as if she were only glad of him and wanting to be glad for him; as if death had never struck near her or walked with the men she knew.

Simon made a movement of his head that seemed to answer the question unless one stopped to wonder whether it meant yes or no. He went on before that could happen, "I nearly didn't come here. What I'd really hoped to do was curl up at home with a good book from the circulating library."

"What was the book?"

"Just a piece of some guy's autobiography. However, when I went to pick it up, it was gone. A man named Nick Vaschetti had it earlier in the evening. He hadn't finished with it—but he has now. I suppose you wouldn't know where it is?"

Her eyes were still pools of jet in the mask of her face.

"Why do you say that?" She seemed to have difficulty in articulating.

"Lots of people read. It occurred to me—"

"I mean that this—this Vaschetti—hadn't finished with the book—but he has now?"

"He's given up reading," explained the Saint carelessly. "He was so upset about having the book taken away from him that he stepped out of an eighth-floor window, with the help of a couple of your pals."

"I don't suppose you've told anyone you're Maris," the Saint said.

He watched the warm ivory of her face fade and freeze into alabaster.

"He's—dead?"

"Well," said the Saint, "it was a long drop to the sidewalk, and on account of the rubber shortage he didn't bounce so good."

The bartender was standing over them expectantly. Simon said, "Bourbon for me, and I guess you know what the lady's drinking." He became absorbed in the way the man worked with his big, deft hands.

And then suddenly he knew all about everything, and it was like waking up under an ice-cold shower.

He took his breath back gradually, and said without a change in his voice except that the smile was no longer there, "You don't know Brother Blatt and his playmates very well, do you, Olga? Especially Maris. But if I'd only been a little brighter, I'd have just stayed here and found Maris."

She was staring at him rigidly, with wide, tragical eyes. It was a good act, he thought cynically.

The bartender stirred their drinks and set them up, fastidiously wiping spots of moisture from the bar around them. Simon appealed to him.

"I should have asked you in the first place, shouldn't I, Joe? You could have shown me Maris."

The man's big square face began to crinkle in its ready, accommodating smile.

And the Saint knew he was right—even though the conclusion had come to him in one lightning-flash of revelation, and the steps toward it still had to be retraced.

Maris, the man nobody knew. Maris, the man nobody had ever heard of. The truly invisible man. The man whom the assistant manager of the Ascot might have been referring to, and have forgotten, even, when he said that he had been chatting with a friend when Nick Vaschetti came home to die. The man nobody ever saw, or ever would see—because they never looked.

Simon lifted his glass and took a sip.

"You could have told me, couldn't you?" he said, with his eyes like splinters of blue steel magnetized to the man's face. "Because everybody calls you Joe, but they don't give a damn about your last name. And I don't suppose you'd tell them it's Maris, anyway."

It was strange that everything could be so clear up to that instant, and then be blotted out in an explosion of blackness that sprang from somewhere behind his right ear and dissolved the universe into a timeless midnight.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Funeral Bells

THERE were bells tolling in the distance.

Enormous, sluggish bells that paused in interminable suspense between each titanic *bong!* of their clappers.

Simon Templar was floating through stygian space toward them, so that the clanging became louder and sharper and the tempo became more rapid as he speeded toward it.

He was hauling on the bell cords himself. It seemed vaguely ridiculous to be ringing peals for your own funeral, but that was what he was doing.

His arms ached from the toil. They felt as though they were being pulled out of their sockets. And the knell was blending into pain and sinking under it. A pain that swelled and receded like a leaden tide . . . like a pulse beat. . . .

His mind came back gradually out of the dark, awakening to the realization that the carillon was being played inside his own cranium, and the pain was synchronized strangely with the beating of his own heart.

He became aware that he was in a windowless chamber with some sort of plastered rock walls. A naked light bulb shone in the middle of the low ceiling. It was a cellar. There were collections and scatterings of the kind of junk that accumulates in cellars. There was an ugly iron furnace, and lines and crisscrosses of pipe hung high under the ceiling, wandering from point to point on undivinable errands, like metal worms in exposed transit from one hole to another.

He was close to one of the walls, sagging downward and outward, his whole weight hanging from his outstretched arms. He had been tied by the wrists to two of the overhead pipes, about six feet from the floor and the same distance apart. That accounted for the ache in his arms. Otherwise, he was unconfined.

He found the floor with his feet and straightened his knees. That eased the racking strain on his joints and ligaments, and reduced the pain of the ropes biting into his wrists, and might eventually give the throbbing of his strangled circulation a chance to die down. But it was the only constructive movement he could make.

Then he saw Olga Ivanovitch.

She was against the wall at right angles to him, tied to the pipes in exactly the same manner, but she was quite conscious and standing upright. She didn't look trim and sleek as he had last seen her. One of the braids of her coiled hair had broken loose and fallen over her shoulder like a drooping wing, and the demure dark dress she had been wearing was disheveled and torn away from one creamy shoulder. She was watching the Saint's recovery with

eyes like scorched holes in the desperate pallor of her beauty.

It was the shock of recognition as much as anything which helped to clear the rest of the fuzzy cobwebs from his brain. His headache was more bearable now, but he had an idea that he wouldn't want anyone to lay a heavy hand on the place behind his right ear where it seemed to come from.

"To digress a moment from what we were saying," he managed to remark aloud in a thick voice that grew clearer and stronger with each passing breath, "what the hell did Joe hit me with—a boomerang? I took only a sip of that drink, and it wasn't any worse than the stuff they served me before."

"Blatt hit you from behind," she said. "He came up behind you while you were talking. I tried to warn you with my eyes. He was very quick, and nobody would have seen it. Then he caught you, and they said you were drunk and passed out. They took you into a back room, and that was the end of it."

Simon glanced at his surroundings again. They were depressingly reminiscent of many similar surroundings that he had been in before. He seemed to have spent a great deal of his life being knocked on the head and tied up in cellars.

"And so, by one easy transfer," he observed, "we arrive in the bomb-proof doghouse."

"This is the cellar of my house. There is a back way out of the Blue Goose. They took you out and brought you here."

"Well, well, well. We certainly do lead a hectic life. Never a dull moment."

Her gaze was wondering.

"You jest in the face of certain death. Are you a fatalist, or are you only a fool?"

"I've certainly acted like a fool," Simon admitted ruefully. "But as for this death business—that shouldn't lose you any sleep. You didn't have any nightmares over Matson, did you?"

"I have seen too much to have nightmares," she said wearily. "But I give you my word that I have never had a hand in any murder. I didn't know they were going to kill Matson. I knew nothing about him, except that he was one of their men, and I was told to amuse him. But after he had been killed—what could I do? I couldn't bring him back to life, or even prove that they did it. And Vaschetti. I thought Vaschetti was safe in jail when I. . . ."

"When you what?"

"When I went to his room this afternoon to see if I could find—anything."

The Saint wondered if the blow on his head had done something to him. He looked at her through a film of unreality.

He said, "Such as a diary of names and plac[illegible]?"

"Anyt[illegible] Anything I could find. I thought [illegible]ght have kept something, and I w[illegible]d it."

"Wha[illegible] for—blackmail?"

"To turn over to the FBI, when I had enough."

He had learned before that he couldn't needle her, but it was a discovery that she could astound him.

"You mean you were planning to sell your own gang down the river?"

"Of course."

MAYBE it was better to occupy his twinging head with material things. On due consideration, he admired the basic ingenuity of the way he was tied up. It was so simple and practical and economical of rope, and yet it completely eliminated all the standard tricks of escape.

There was no chance of reaching a knot with the fingertips or the teeth, or cleverly breaking a watch-glass and sawing the cords on a sharp fragment, or employing any of the other devices which have become so popular in these situations. It was one of the most effective systems the Saint had encountered in an exceptionally privileged experience, and he made a mental note to use it on his next prisoner.

Meanwhile he said, without much subtlety, "But would that have been cricket, tovarich? Do you want me to believe that anyone so beautiful could sink so low?"

For an instant he thought that he actually struck a flash from her dark eyes.

"Why do you think I'm here now—tovarich?"

"I had wondered about that," he said. "But I decided you might have a fetish about being crucified."

"I'm here because they don't trust me any more. I helped to bring you here. I wanted them to believe I was still helping them. I couldn't do anything else. . . . And I was only waiting for a chance to help you. . . . They tied you up. I helped them. And then, suddenly, they took hold of me and tied me up, too. I fought them, but it was no use."

"You have such a sweet, honest face—why wouldn't they trust you?"

"That was because of what you said in the Blue Goose," she told him without resentment. "You asked me if I had Vaschetti's book. Before that, they thought it was you who had been there first. But when Maris heard you accuse me, he was suspicious. They knew that I liked you, and I had seen you. And for Maris, a little suspicion is enough."

Simon decided that there was not so much profit in standing upright as he had hoped. If he rested his arms, the cords gnawed at his wrists again. If he favored his wrists, the strain of fatigue on his shoulders tautened slowly into exquisite torture. He had had no sensation in his hands and no control of his fingers for some time.

"And you really expect me to swallow that without water?" he asked scornfully.

"It doesn't matter much what you believe now," she replied tiredly. "It's too late. We shall both be dead in a little while. We cannot escape, and Siegfried is pitiless."

"Pardon me if I get a bit confused among all these people, but who is Siegfried?"

"Siegfried Maris. You call him Joe. I think he is the head of the Nazi sabotage organization in the United States."

The Saint thought so, too. He had had that all worked out before Blatt hit him on the head. It explained why Matson had ever gone to the Blue Goose at all. It explained why Vaschetti had touched there in his travels. It explained why the Blue Goose played such a part in the whole incident—why it was the local focus of infection, and why it could send its tendrils of corruption into honest local political organization, squeezing and pressing cunningly here and there, using the human failings of the American scene to undermine America. A parasitic vine that used the unassuming and unconscious flaws in its host to destroy the tree. . . .

It was not incredible that the prime root of the growth should turn out to be Siegfried Maris, whom everyone knew as Joe. Simon had always had it in his mind that the man he was hunting for would turn out to be someone that everybody called Joe. And this was the man. The man who could have anything around and not be part of it, who could always say, whatever happened, that he just happened to be legitimately there. The man nobody saw, in the place nobody thought of. . . .

"Comrade Maris," said the Saint, "has been offstage far too much. It's not fair to the readers. What is he doing now?"

"I expect he's upstairs, with the others. Searching my house."

"He must like the place. How long have we been here?"

"Not very long. Not long at all."

"What's he searching for?"

"The book," she said. "Vaschetti's little book."

"Why here?"

"Because I did find it. Because it has half the code names and meeting places in this country listed in it. But Maris will find it. I couldn't hide it very well."

Simon was able to shrug his left shoulder tentatively. No weight dragged on it. They would have found and taken the gun in his spring holster, of course. It wouldn't have been much use to him if they hadn't. However. . . .

"So it was you who tore Vaschetti's room at the Ascot apart," he said. "But your mob thought it was me. That's why my room was gone over this evening while we were out together. You aren't overlooking any bets, are you? And since Vaschetti's indiscreet memoirs are still missing, not to mention Brother Matson's notes and papers—"

"They have those," she said listlessly. "They were in the gladstone bag."

He was shaken as if he had been jolted in the ribs, but he went on.

"So anyway, we now have a well-staged scene in the old torture chamber, where you trick me into revealing where I have hidden all these priceless documents. You're doing a great show, Olga. If I could get my hands together I would ap-

plaud. You must be a full-fledged member of this lodge of Aryan cutthroats."

"Think what you please," she said indifferently. "It makes no difference."

SHE could always make him feel wrong. Like now, when she was not angry, but wounded in everything but dignity. Because that devastating ingenuousness of hers was real; because the bridges she walked on were firm and tried, and she had built them herself, and she was as sure of them and her way as he was sure of his own. There could be no facile puncturing of a foundation like that, with a skilled flick of the wrist.

She said, without any emotion, "You think of me as a mercenary adventuress. I don't deny it. I have worked for Maris, and other men—only for money. But that was before the Nazis invaded Russia. You will not believe that a greedy adventuress could have a heart, or a conscience. But it made all the difference to me. . . . I pretended that it didn't. I went on working for them—taking their money, doing what they told me, trying to keep their trust.

"But I was only waiting and working for the time when I could send all of them to the hell where they belong. . . . Yet, I had my own sins to redeem. I had done wrong things, too. That's why I thought that if I could bring something with me, something big enough to prove that all my heart had changed—then perhaps your FBI would understand and forgive me, and let me begin again here. . . . I could swear all this to you, but what is swearing without faith?"

The Saint's head was much clearer now. He saw her again through the ruthless screen of his disbelief. And still she wasn't trying to sell him from behind the counter on any phoney job of tying-up. Her wrists were lashed as cruelly tight as his own. He could see the livid ridges in her skin where the ropes cut. Her face was damp like his from strain and pain.

"Damn it, tovarich," he said musingly, "you could act anyone in Hollywood off the screen. You've almost convinced me that you're on the level. You couldn't possibly be, but you sound just like it."

Her eyes were unwavering against his, and they looked very old. But that was from the patience of a great sadness.

"I only wish you could have believed me before the end. It would have been nicer. But it will not be long now. Siegfried Maris is one of the most important men that Hitler has in this country. He won't take any chances with us."

"At least," said the Saint, "we should feel flattered about getting the personal attention of the big shot himself."

He had crossed his left leg over his right now, but it was not with the idea of striking an elegant and insouciant pose. He was pressing the outsides of his legs together, feeling for something. He had been searched and disarmed, he knew, but there was his own special armory which the ungodly didn't always. . . .

"If we could have caught Maris," Olga was saying, out of that passionless and regretful resignation, "it would have meant as much as winning a battle at the front. I would have liked to do that very much. Then we could have been quite happy about this."

It was too good to be true, but it was true. He could feel the solid, flat hardness of the haft and blade between the movements of his legs. And with that, he had a fantastic inspiration that might grow into fantastic escape. But he had seen fantasy come real too often to discard it for nothing but its name.

The glint in his eyes was like sunlight on cut sapphires.

"Maybe we can still be happy, Olga," he said, and there was a lilt of exultant vitality in his voice. "We'll try to repeat a significant scrap of United Nations history. You, like some other Russians, were petting the wrong dog. Until you saw the error of your ways. And it bit you. Now I shall try to come through with the lend-lease matériel."

CHAPTER TWELVE

One Chance for Life

OLGA IVANOVITCH stared at him as though she was certain now that he was out of his mind.

"No, darling, I'm not," he said, before she could put her own words to it. "I was just remembering a movie serial that

I saw as a boy, which starred the greatest of all escape artists—Harry Houdini."

"How interesting," she said blankly.

It was lucky, he thought, that he liked his shoes loose and comfortable. Otherwise, getting them off might have been quite a problem. As it was, he was able to tread on one heel with the opposite instep and force one shoe off with only a moderate amount of violence. The other shoe presented a little more difficulty, without a hard welt to scrape against, but he went on working at it.

"Now don't go all Russian on me and relapse into brooding despair," he pleaded. "You ought to be interested in the late Mr. Houdini. He was a real maestro at getting out of situations like this. I was thinking of one installment in which he was tied to some sort of Oriental torture wheel, in very much the same way as we're tied up now. He managed to worry his shoes and socks off, and neatly unfastened the knots on his wrists with his toes."

He had the other shoe off at last. The socks were easier. He only had to tread on a bit of slack at each toe in turn and pull his feet out.

"So what?" Olga said skeptically. "Can you ever reach your wrists with your toes?"

"Now you're coming to life," Simon approved. "I used to be a fairly agile guy before I started drinking myself to death, and I think I can manage that." He twisted his body and balanced himself on one foot, and swung his other leg lithely up to kick his hand. "There. I always knew all those years I spent in the Follies chorus would come in handy some day," he said contentedly.

"But the knots," she said in the same tone as before—but that tone was already being contradicted by the curiosity kindling in her eyes.

"I'm afraid I'm not quite that good," he confessed. "However, I have an alternative solution for them which Harry might not have considered entirely ethical."

He was already working up his right trouser leg with his naked left foot. Under the amazed eyes of the girl, the upper end of the sheath and the haft of his knife came into view. He grasped the haft with his toes and drew the blade gently out of the scabbard and laid it on the floor.

"When I was swinging through the trees in my last incarnation," he said, "this would have been duck soup for me. But I'm a bit out of practice these days."

He was concentrating singly on the knife, maneuvering it between his two feet, getting the firmest possible grip on the handle between his big toe and the one next to it, adjusting and testing it before he made a decisive move. There was no sound in the room but the faint scuff of his efforts. His wrists hurt like hell, but he had forgotten about them. The sweat was standing out on his forehead by the time he was satisfied.

"Now we get to the really fancy part of the trick," he said. "Like the man on the flying trapeze without a net, I won't be able to go back and start over if I muff it."

He poised himself in the same way as he had done for his preliminary experiment, but much more carefully, gauged his distances, and drew a deep breath and held it.

Then he swung his leg, aiming the razor edge of the blade at the link of rope between his left wrist and the pipe.

Once, twice, three times he repeated the same pendulum movement, trying to strike the same spot on the rope each time, feeling the keen blade bite the fibers at every stroke.

Then the knife twisted between his toes, but he managed to keep a precarious hold on it. He brought it gingerly down to the floor and adjusted it again, with the aid of his left foot, in an intolerable hush of intense patience and concentration.

He swung his leg again.

Once more.

Twice more.

The knife spun out of his hold and clattered to the floor.

It was beyond his reach, and beyond hers.

He heard the girl's pent-up breath break out of her lungs in a long, throaty sob, and saw tears swimming in her eyes.

He knew then, at last, without thinking about it any more, that she had told him the truth. He had been unsure. He had taken a chance on it, because he was

forced to, but wondering all the time if this would end up as the supreme sadism of tantalization. If after he had revealed his secret weapon, and freed himself, if he could free himself, she would only call out, and Maris would walk in with a gun, and all the hope and struggle would have been for nothing. Now he knew. She couldn't have gasped and wept like that, otherwise—wouldn't have needed to, no matter how well she was playing a part.

It was worth something to be sure of that.

The Saint smiled grimly as he inspected the section of rope that he had been working on. He had done a good job, in spite of everything. It wasn't anything like the rope it had been before.

Then with an abrupt and feral outburst of titanic effort he threw all his weight and strength together against the partly severed cords, dropping his weight on them with a plunging jerk, and simultaneously thrusting himself away from the wall with his feet and contracting his arms together with all the power of his torso.

The veins swelled in his neck, and the muscles rippled over his body in quivering waves. For an instant it felt as if his wrists were being bitten off. . . .

And then, with a suddenness that was physically sickening, the frayed and slashed portion of rope parted with a snap that flung him whirling outward and around.

He heard the girl sob again, but this time it was with a note of almost hysterical laughter.

He regained his balance without a waste motion, and fell to attacking the knots that bound his right hand.

"I must be slipping," he said. "I used to do things like that just in order to warm up."

THE knots weren't so easy. His hands were numb, and he had to drive deliberate commands through for every movement of his fingers. He worked as fast as he could through that nightmarish impediment.

At last he was free. His wrists were chafed and bleeding a little. But that was nothing. The sense of freedom, of triumph, was like an intoxicating wind blowing through the reviving spaces of his soul.

He scooped up his knife, a little awkwardly because of the cramp in his hands, and cut Olga loose. She almost fell against him, and he had to hold her up for a moment. Until her clinging grew up from the weakness of reaction into something else.

Then he steadied her on her feet and left her standing while he went back to put on his shoes and socks. The return of circulation was filling his hands with pins and needles; but gradually, with the relentless exertion, his fingers began to feel less like swollen frozen sausages.

"There is a way out of here without going through the house," she was saying breathlessly. "We can slip out without them ever knowing that we've gone."

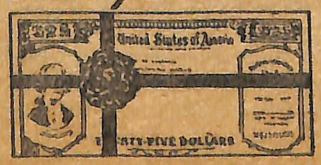
"Slip out?" He glanced up at her. "Darling, that would be a hell of an anticlimax. I'm going upstairs now and get Matson's notes and Vaschetti's diary away from dear old Joe!"

"But how can you?" she cried. "He'll shoot you like a dog. They took your gun. I saw them. We can call the police—"

Simon straightened up, and looked down in silent, reckless laughter at her desperate, imploring face.

"I've got my knife," he said, "but I haven't got any guarantee that the police would get here in time. And meanwhile Maris and Co. might find out that we'd

FOR A Merry Christmas



GIVE WAR BONDS

The Christmas present with a future—
A WAR BOND!

got away, and decide to take the brakes off themselves."

Then she was in his arms, her breath warm against his cheek. And then he was bruising her mouth with his own, and it would never be like that again. But there was no time for that now and perhaps there never had been. It was like so many things in his life. They were always too late, and there was never any time.

He disengaged himself very gently.

"Now," he said, "we will have the last word with Joe."

The door on the other side of the cellar was not locked. Simon went up the crude wooden stairs, very quietly, and was conscious of Olga Ivanovitch following him. But he didn't look back. He came out through another unlatched door into the hall of the house. There was no guard there either.

Which was reasonable enough, just as the Saint's faith in his knife was reasonable. He knew what it could do, and what he could do with it. He knew how it could transform itself into a streak of living quicksilver, swift as the flash of light from its polished blade, true as a rifle, deadly as any bullet that was ever launched by erupting chemicals.

He held it delicately in his resensitized fingers, frail and strong as a bird, only waiting for him to release it into life.

He was outside another door then, listening, when the voice came firmly through it to his ears. Just a voice—the voice of Siegfried Maris, generally known as Joe. But coming with a clear suddenness that was like traveling back in time and never having heard a talking picture, and suddenly hearing a screen speak.

It said, "Keep your hands well up, Lieutenant. Please don't try anything stupid. It wouldn't do you any good."

And then Kinglake's savage growl, "How in hell did you get away from the Blue Goose?"

The Saint's mouth opened and closed again in a noiseless gasp, and a ripple of irresistible laughter rose up through him like a stream of bubbles, to break soundlessly at his lips. Even at a moment like that he had to enjoy the perfection of that finishing touch.

"We have our own way out," Maris replied calmly. "It's very useful, as you see. But if you didn't know about it, how did you follow us here?"

"I didn't. When I didn't find Templar at the Blue Goose, I thought he might have come here with Ivanovitch."

"An excellent deduction, Lieutenant. And quite correct. He did come here with Ivanovitch. But that wasn't his choice.... It's very fortunate that you're a detective and not a burglar, isn't it? If you'd been a burglar you wouldn't have made such a clumsy entrance, and it mightn't have been half so easy to catch you."

Simon settled his fingers on the door knob as if it had been a wafer-shelled egg. He began to turn it with micrometric gentleness.

Kinglake asked, "What have you done with Templar and the girl?"

"You'll see for yourself, when you join them in just a few minutes."

"So you're Maris, are you? I should have known it."

"A pardonable oversight, Lieutenant."

Simon waited through an infinitesimal pause, with the door handle fully turned.

Kinglake said, "I guess you can have oversights, too. You aren't getting away with anything, Joe. I've got men out—"

The low, hard chuckle of Maris came through the door.

"An old bluff, Lieutenant, but always worth trying. I know that you came alone. Fritzie was watching you outside, and we made sure of that before we let you break in. Now if you'll be very careful about holding your arms up while Blatt takes your gun—"

That was the pleasantly dramatic moment when the Saint threw the door open.

It was a nice composition that framed itself through the opening, a perfect instant of arrested motion.

There was Lieutenant Kinglake standing with his hands up and his jaw tensed and a stubborn snarl around his eyes, with Johan Blatt advancing toward him. Fritzie Weinbach stood a little off to the right, with a big, snub-nosed automatic leveled at the detective's sternum. Simon could identify them both without ever having seen them before—the tall blond man and the fat red man with the cold, bleached eyes.

He saw Siegfried Maris, too, for the first time as the man he was instead of the forgotten bartender called Joe. It was amazing what a difference there was. He sat behind a desk, without the disguise of the white coat and the quick, obsequious serving movements. He wore an ordinary dark business suit, and was obviously the dominant personality of the group. For ultimate proof, he even had a flat, light tan case and a shabby pocket memorandum book among some papers on the blotter in front of him. Simon knew even from where he stood that they must be the notes of Henry Stephen Matson and the diary of Nick Vaschetti. It was all there.

And Maris was there, with his square powerful face that hadn't a natural smile in any line of it, and he was turning toward the interruption with his eyes widening and one of his strong, swift hands already starting to move. The Saint knew without any further study, without a second's hesitation, that this was the one man he had to get and be sure of, no matter what else happened afterward.

The knife sped from his hand like a glitter of leaping silver, flying like a splinter of living light straight for the newly retired bartender's throat.

Then Lieutenant Kinglake had taken advantage of the diversion to make a grab for his gun, and the room was full of thunder and the dry, stinging tang of cordite.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In at the Death

SIMON TEMPLAR didn't carve notches in the handle of his knife, because they would eventually have affected the balance and he was used to it and he hoped it would last for a long time. He did worry about rust and the way it could dull a blade. He wiped the blade very carefully on Maris' shirt before he put the knife back in its familiar sheath.

"Let's face it," he said. "He did pour some of the lousiest drinks I ever paid for."

Kinglake was reloading his Police Positive with the unconscious detachment of prehistorically rooted habit.

He said, almost awkwardly for him, "I just wanted to be in at the death."

"You were," Simon assured him, somewhat unnecessarily.

"Are there any more of 'em?"

"Quite a lot—I hope. But not around here. And we don't have to bother about them. Just turn that stuff on the desk over to the FBI. The rest will be their routine."

"I'd sure like to know what happened to you."

The Saint told him.

Kinglake scratched his head.

"I've seen plenty in my time, believe it or not," he said. "But you've topped all of it." He ended up with an admission. "I'll have to think of a new story now, though, because I messed up the one you gave me."

"It doesn't matter," said the Saint. "Whatever you said, you can tell 'em you only said it for a stall, because you couldn't give out with what you really knew. The true story is your story now. Only leaving me out. There's plenty of evidence on that desk. Go on and grab yourself some glory."

"But these are the three guys you named in the *Star-Item*."

"So what? So I happened to know too much, and I was too smart for anybody's good. You knew just as much if not

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more, but you were playing a cagey game. You say that by shooting my mouth off like that, I told Maris and Co. that they were hot, and nearly ruined all your well-laid plans.

"That's why you were so hopping mad about me. In fact, you had to perform superhuman feats to salvage the situation after I balled it up. Say anything you like. I won't contradict you. It suits me better that way. And there's nobody else left who can call you a liar."

The lieutenant's steely eyes flickered over the room. The truth of that last theorem was rather gruesomely irrefutable.

Then his glance went to Olga Ivanovitch.

She stood very quietly beside the Saint, her pale face composed and expressionless, her dark eyes passing unemotionally over the raw stains and ungainly attitudes of violent death.

"What about her?" Kinglake asked.

Simon's pockets had been emptied completely. He bent over one of the bodies and relieved it of a packet of cigarettes that it wouldn't be needing any more.

"She's one of our people. Why the hell do you think she was tied up in the cellar with me? But I couldn't tell you before."

"But what story shall I give out?"

"Like me—the less you say about her the better," Simon told him. "She was just one of the hostesses at the Blue Goose, and Maris was making use of her through his rôle of bartender. He set her up in this house, so he had a key. But she wasn't here tonight. When the setup began to look too sticky, she scrammed. You don't think she's worth fussing about."

Simon hadn't looked at the girl until then. He did now.

"By the way," he said casually, "you'd better get a move on with this scramming act. Kinglake is going to have to call headquarters in a few minutes. You can scram in my car—it won't take me more than ten minutes to check out of the Alamo House. Go and put some things in a bag."

"Yes," she said, impassively and obediently, and went out of the room.

SIMON smoked his inherited cigarette with unalloyed enjoyment.

Kinglake gathered the papers on the desk and frowned over them wisely.

The Saint made another search of the unlamented ungodly, and found his own automatic in Weinbach's pocket. He nested it fondly back in his clip.

Olga Ivanovitch came in again.

She had changed into a simple gray suit with plain white trimmings. Her glossy black hair was all in place again, and her face was cool and freshly sweetened. She looked younger than Simon had ever remembered her. She carried a pair of suitcases.

Simon hitched himself off the corner of the desk where he had perched.

He shook hands with Kinglake for the last time, and picked up Olga's bags and went out with her. They went down the crushed coral walk through a rambling profusion of poinsettias and bougainvillea that were only dark clusters under the moon.

The Gulf waters rolled against the beach beyond the seawall with a hushed, friendly roar.

They left the gate, and the girl's step faltered beside him. He slowed with her, turning, and she stopped and faced him.

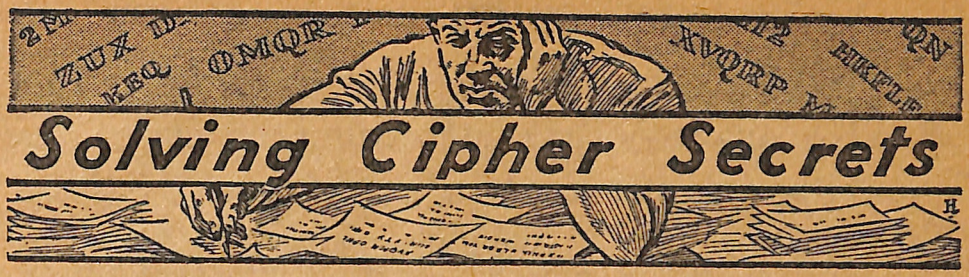
Light seeping from a window of the house behind them like a timid thief in a dimout touched her black halo of hair and glistened on her wide, steady eyes.

"Where can I go now?" she asked.

"My God, you Russians! Look, darling. You played along with Maris for quite a while. Several of the ungodly must know it. But they'll never know that Maris ever changed his mind about you. They'll only know that you got out of the place one jump ahead of the barrage. So you're all set to move in again somewhere else.

"That's what you wanted, isn't it? Well, I wasn't kidding, either. That's what you're going to do. Only next time you'll do it legitimately—for the FBI or something like that. I'm taking you to Washington with me so you can meet a guy named Hamilton. I have to see him anyway. . . . Besides," he added constructively, "it's a dull trip, and we might make fun on the way."

THE END



By M. E. Ohaver

A CIPHER is a secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Helpful hints appear in this department each month. Study them carefully.

CRYPTOGRAMS

No. 1—An Island Mystery. By Zadig. Several entries are available. LXS, KYLX, and phrase LXSES HES. YA and ending -YAV. Thrice-used suffix -USFF.

YA GBBRBB-XHOALSR *XHYLY LXSES HES *NBZPYSF, UYGYAV RSHR, REHVVSR TEBZ LXS GHOUL, EBPPSR BT ZSZBEM KYLX UYDOYR UBH, FBOUUSFF, FCSSQXUSFF, TBESGSE FUHGSF OAUSFF VYGSA ESGYLHUYNYAV FHUL.

No. 2—Strange Pair. By Frances Heath. Identify phrase GNH LGNHD, noting repeated three-letter combination. LUH, GOL, and YULOU will follow.

LUVK GOL YULOU ZFHRXHZ LT EUXPEVZ NECH AVERY GLUSMHZ. LUH XZ GNH RNLORNLO, *RNXUHZH BLPHZGXR BLS, EUB GNH LGNHD XZ GNH FLVED AHED.

No. 3—All Aboard! By †Herbert. Asterisks in cryptograms indicate capitalization. All starred words here are well keyed. *RLZXKBZR gives all letters for XKB, LR, and XBR.

XKB *SZBGX *RLZXKBZR, *BPNFZB *DVFOABZ, OBGTBY ULZ *YNLHGRB, *DFOOFRSY, *ABRTBZ, *LPGKG, *PFRRBGNLOFY, *YX. *NGVO, *EKFEGSL, GRA NLFRXY BGYX, LR XZGEH XBR, GX RFRB *N. *P.

No. 4—In Memory of Dr. G. W. Carver. By °Chemystic. Try for two-letter word SO (frequencies 3-12). Then attempt the phrase KEKON SIENF.

EVICT CAVONIAR KNIFALYR FONUDESBO GNIV KOECAY ZABBR VEX SO BURYOF GAOB, BUCIBOAV, UCRABEYINR. GBIIN-RHOOK LIVKIACFR, KEKON SIENF, FXCEVUYO.

No. 5—Small Potatoes. By *Nujak. Short words DCFD and FSA provide ingress. Having guessed these, try for the last two words of the message.

GEKORDOUR, ZOGODFPL RUONSUN ET DPFSRBEPD FSA RHBBGL, UESRDODHDNR YODFG TFUDEP OS ZEANPS MFPTFPN. UEZBGNDN BPEUHPNZNSD RUEBN PFSXR RE YFRD DCFD VOK VHROSNRR RNNZR GOXN BNSSL FSDN.

No. 6—Precious Diluent! By †Acahti. Note high frequency and doubling of symbol A. Then try for STAR and VTAZ, continuing with TIRBLAB, SEVAL, etc.

STAR CILPTEYORK PIPINGALY, TUIYASOMA EDDAKABDZ CEZY MUL SEVAL VTAZ PURVEOR, ECCLUFONEVADZ MOJA TIRBLAB BUDDELY CAL TIRBLAB PIGOP MAAV!

No. 7—Empirical Therapy. By †Dr. A. Symbol L may be guessed by its frequency (16 times), doubling, and use in last two positions. Words 3 and 15 will come next.

FINELY ZOREBLZ, ADUNALLEAD PLEAINK BRUALN ADLNGOLIAUP, PREAGUE URYUEL, IEYUZPRJLNLY CGPA IEAUX RJLN CUJL DIEYNLY KLGNZ XGALN!

No. 8—Seen at the Store. By Alma L. Roy. Affixes BP- and -BPJ will help with 2nd and 10th words. Proceed then with KVRUP. Note final symbol E in the word list.

PKDOYNNX BPVDUCAUPR RLBSU-RLUNVRZ YNHZYQURBS GXOQKN KVRUP HDKFBTUG YRRDYSRBFU RDYTU-PYOU UPTBPJ, RZAG: HXDUE, RDBOYE, HANFUE, VNX-RKE, FYHUE, SYNKE, YSBTUE, SDYFUE, FUNKE, JDYVNUE.

No. 9—Was It Loaded? By °I. Givup. This alliterative message uses only four different second-position symbols. Does initial symbol O signify a vowel or a consonant?

OFQHYAPE OFHYAXU, OFYAHX OFXRYOFT, OFTPVBSFAHG OBYHBO OBYRHA; OFGH OPYQBGLOHTA; OBAPSFAHG OFLTPKPEHTA OBXFS OUYFPE. OUXAPKDPTL OPYNFV!

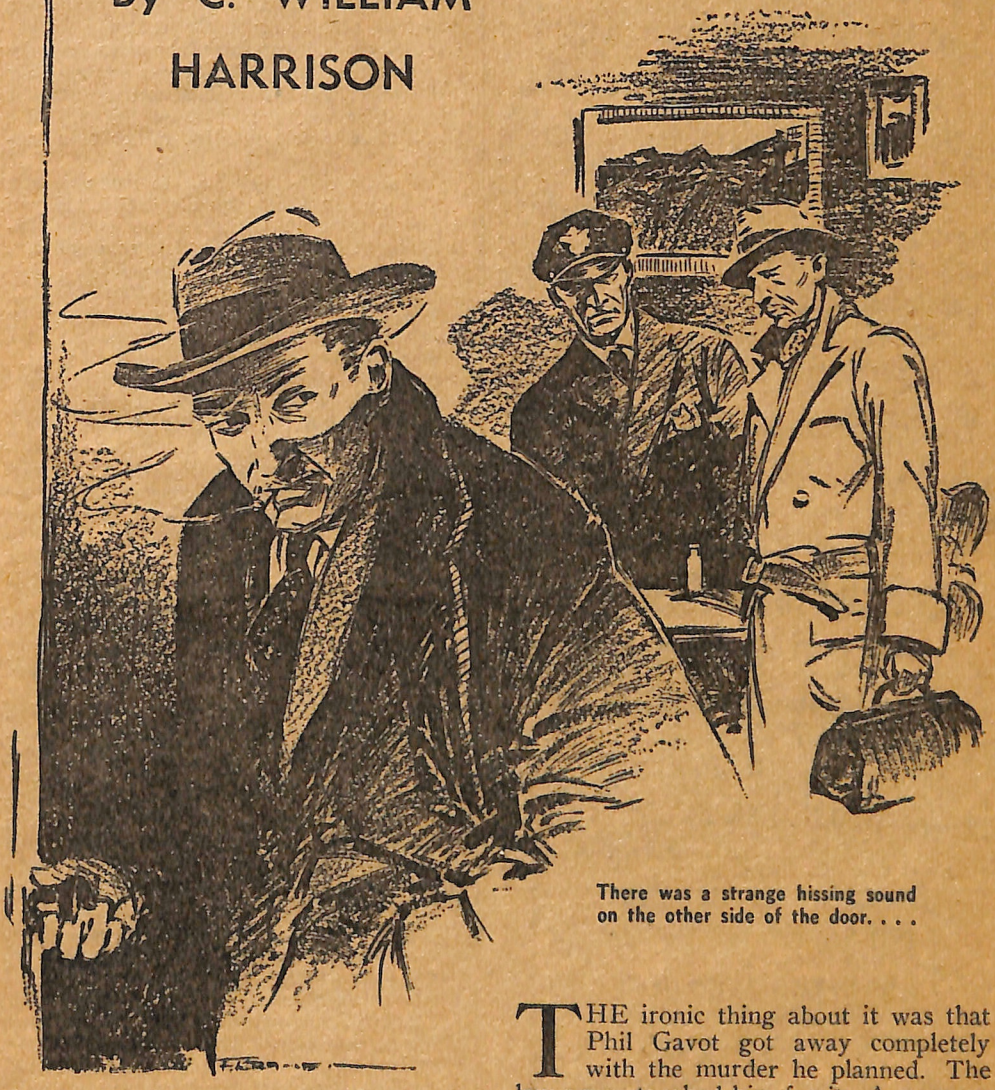
No. 10—Appropriate Atmosphere. By Z. Zyzz. This final cipher abounds in interesting patterns. Nevertheless it is not too easy! Spot your own clews in this one.

ZGGUOKOKAU ZSFDZL UDZEZOKEP TSFD SFZLO TFCB, DKEXU GKU, GUSAZVU XFDDREKOH. YBZJKEP BFPL, NUZGUV NKPN RGFE ZEVKSFEL, KBBRDU EKPNOOKDU LXUEU. XNRSXN XNFKSL XZSFB *HRBUOKVU NHDEL.

(Continued on page 96)

Now You're Cookin', Killer!

By C. WILLIAM HARRISON



There was a strange hissing sound on the other side of the door. . . .

When you dish up a blueprint for murder, be sure that X doesn't mark the spot for— you!

THE ironic thing about it was that Phil Gavot got away completely with the murder he planned. The law never touched him for it. A man can do murder with immunity if he is smart, and Phil Gavot was smart, plenty. Otherwise he could not have killed Stanly Dermott without the law ever once guessing his guilt.

They had laid their plans in the office of Dermott & Gavot, Investments, working out the final details by mail which Phil

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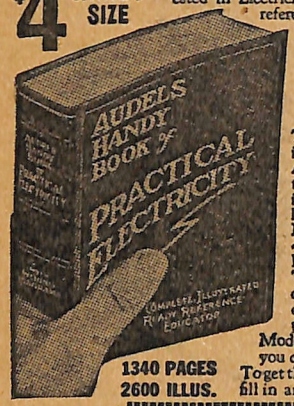

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SAYMAN SALVE

Gavot had never received until death had started reaching out for his partner.

——— Hotel,
Chicago, Illinois.
Dear Phil:

The more I consider it, the more certain I am that our plan will work, and to our mutual profit. As I see it, there is absolutely no danger for either of us. All my friends and business associates know of my ill health, and they will accept my attempt at suicide as "one of those things." We will have their sympathy, rather than suspicion.

I am writing this just to make certain that we are agreed on the details. If you see an error in this, write me special delivery at once. If I don't hear from you, I'll know it is okay to go ahead.

On the 15th, three days from today, I will go to the office as usual. During the day, I will mention to my secretary that I would be better off dead than feeling as I do. (She thinks my health is worse than it actually is, you know, and she will testify to the reason for my attempt at suicide.)

In mid-afternoon, I will remove all money and negotiable securities from the safe, package, and mail to a non-existent address in a distant city, with postal instructions for the package to be returned in thirty days if undelivered. When the package is returned to me in thirty days, the investigation will be considerably cooled off.

Before I leave the office the afternoon of the 15th, I will, as usual, lock the safe, only this time my secretary will merely *think* I locked it. Of course I will not actually lock it. When my secretary and I are out of the office, I will pretend to have forgotten my medicine, and return to the office alone.

It will take but a minute to jerk the safe door open, scatter papers, knock the electric clock from my desk, breaking it and establishing an apparent time for the faked robbery of our safe. The hands of the clock, of course, will be set forward six hours before I break it, to about eleven o'clock.

At about ten o'clock I will telegraph you my decision to "end it all," after which I will drink a quarter-ounce of chloroform. The fatal time of this poison is about three hours, so you will have, after arriving by train, at least two hours to notify the authorities, and reach my home with a doctor to give me an antidote. This, I believe, concludes our plans.

Very sincerely yours,
Stanly Dermott.

P.S. Naturally I trust you implicitly, but should you by any chance plan to delay your arrival long enough for the chloroform to kill me, I have left a detailed admission of my guilt and your guilt in our lock box at the bank.

P.P.S. Destroy this letter after you have read it.

Stan.

INSIDE the train, Phil Gavot sat with his face close to the window, watching the night-blackened pattern of the Hoosier countryside flash past. They sped through a small town that was already asleep at this early hour, the train wheels clacking across a siding. Smoke from the engine left a filmy gray trail across the sky. Patches of snow were white blurs on the ground outside.

The Serviceman next to Gavot was frowning slightly, as he penciled a letter.

"Writing home, soldier?" Gavot asked.

The boy in uniform grinned. "Uh-huh —writing a buddy back in camp." His grin broadened. "I'm *goin'* home."

The soldier was impatient, but so was Phil Gavot impatient. By now Stanly Dermott should have sent his telegram, and taken his quarter-ounce of chloroform.

The remembrance of Dermott's first postscript on the letter brought a faint smile to Gavot's mouth. Dermott had thought himself smart, guarding against a double-cross by leaving that confession in their jointly held lock box at the bank.

Dermott was smart, but a fool for not giving Phil Gavot credit for having enough brains to foresee such a move. Gavot had guessed that letter of confession from the first, knowing the suspicious and cautious streak in his partner. So he had made the destruction of that letter a part of his own personal plans.

Thinking again, Phil Gavot mentally checked every move he had made, every phase of his counterplan. The simplicity of his plan was perfection in itself, leaving no room for error. He had registered at the hotel in Chicago, just as he had promised his partner, but he had caught the south-bound train the morning of the 15th.

Reaching Indianapolis, he waited until a few minutes before closing time at the bank, then went to the lock box he and Stanly Dermott held jointly. He had known that letter of confession would be there as certainly as if Dermott had told him of it. You don't hold a partnership with a man for twenty years without learning his every quirk and whim.

You may be sitting pretty now . . . but . . .

AFTER WAR, WHAT?

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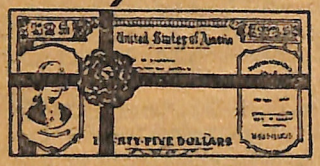

GIVE WAR BONDS

Have you put War Bonds on your Christmas list?

Kidneys Must Clean Out Acids

Excess acids, poisons and wastes in your blood are removed chiefly by your kidneys. Getting up Nights, Burning Passages, Backache, Swollen Ankles, Nervousness, Rheumatic Pains, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes, and feeling worn out, often are caused by non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles. Usually in such cases, the very first dose of Cystex goes right to work helping the Kidneys flush out excess acids and wastes. And this cleansing, purifying Kidney action, in just a day or so, may easily make you feel younger, stronger and better than in years. An iron clad guarantee insures an immediate refund of the full cost unless you are completely satisfied. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose under the money back guarantee so get Cystex from your druggist today for only 35c.

So Phil Gavot destroyed the letter. That was at two o'clock, the afternoon of the 15th. At four o'clock Gavot let himself into Stanly Dermott's apartment, carrying a heavy, square, newspaper-wrapped object in his arm. The apartment was hot, with every window sealed tight by Dermott's hatred for winter weather, but the twenty pounds of dry ice wrapped in the newspaper left Gavot's arm numb.

He slid the dry ice, still wrapped in the paper, beneath Dermott's bed, and after that hurried from the apartment to catch the afternoon flyer for Chicago. Stan Dermott's last letter had been waiting for him at the hotel. . . .

The conductor came into Phil Gavot's coach. "Telegram for Mr. Phil Gavot!"

Gavot signed for the telegram, opened it. It read:

> The Doctor Just Told Me the Worst Stop I'm Not Waiting for the End Stop I'm Taking the Easy Way Out Stop You Think I'm Kidding?
>
> Stan Dermott

The conductor caught the expression that pinched into Phil Gavot's face. "Anything wrong?"

Gavot jerked his eyes up. "I've got to get in touch with the Indianapolis police. I've got to get word to them quick!"

"You couldn't even wire and beat the train in. We'll be at the station in five minutes.

THE police sergeant was a gaunt, weather-reddened man, with a twangy, irritable voice. "What's going on around here, anyhow? You say you're afraid your partner knocked himself off, and not five minutes ago we got a call that your office had been robbed."

Alarm struck Gavot's face. "Robbed?" he echoed. He put just the right amount of incredulity in his tone.

"That's what I said!" Sergeant Renn snapped. Gavot got into the police car, and Renn raced the sedan away from the curb. The siren whimpered into life. Traffic scurried out of their path.

Sergeant Renn said, "Funny Gavot & Dermott would have a suicide and safe robbery the same night."

Anxiety was in the shake of Phil Gavot's head. "It's—it's incredible."

"That's what I mean."

Gavot gave Renn a quick, startled look. "You don't mean you think Stan Dermott could have—" He left his question hanging. He said stiffly, "Stanly Dermott was no crook."

"Was?"

Phil Gavot started inwardly, but he kept his face composed. "Was, or is," he said impatiently. "How can we tell whether Dermott is alive or dead?"

"I got the impression you already knew," Renn said.

Gavot jerked his hand impatiently. "I was on the train returning from Chicago when Dermott's telegram reached me, so how could I know whether he is alive or dead? Don't be a fool, Sergeant."

"I'm not," Renn said in his lazy twang.

There was an unexpected cunning in the sergeant that Phil Gavot had not sensed before. It put him on guard, sent his thoughts racing through every detail of his plans. But there could be no slip-up; everything was iron-clad, unbreakable. The quick, cold fear that had stabbed him crumbled and fell out of his mind. He was safe, and he knew it.

When they reached Dermott's apartment, they would find Dermott dead. An autopsy would show chloroform in the dead man's stomach, and the police would lay that to the cause of Dermott's death, self-administered poison. They would find the box-shaped square of folded newspaper under Dermott's bed, but that would mean nothing, because the dry ice that had been wrapped in the paper would be gone, and the poisonous carbon-dioxide gas the dry ice had generated would have dissipated.

"We ought to pick up Dermott's doctor," Gavot said. "His house is on our way."

"The city ambulance is coming out," Renn answered.

"It might be late. An extra minute might save Dermott's life."

They made a quick stop, and picked up Stanly Dermott's doctor. "I'm not surprised by this," Doctor Brindon said. "Dermott was in my office today, and I couldn't keep the truth from him any longer. He had cancer, and it was only a matter of time until it would get him. He took it pretty hard."

Surprise tugged at Phil Gavot's nerves.

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So Stanly Dermott would have died after all! Still, he told himself, there was nothing lost, and had he let Dermott live, half of the money would have been spent in some hospital.

THE radio in the police sedan hummed, then a voice came in. "Calling Sergeant Renn. Robbery at Gavot & Dermott office occurred at 10:57. Time ascertained by desk clock which was broken during the job."

Sergeant Renn was silent a moment. Then he said, "You were on the train at the time, so that lets you out, Gavot."

Phil Gavot showed surprise. "Surely you didn't think I might have—"

"I think the worst about every man concerned," Renn twanged disagreeably. "You might as well know that we'll check your train story."

Sergeant Renn went on, "If Dermott killed himself, he couldn't have robbed the safe. The time on the telegram proves he sent it before the robbery was pulled."

Gavot didn't answer. Silence, he thought, was his best tool; leave Renn to his own solutions. There would be but one result: Dermott's death would be called suicide, and the robbery would be blamed on some unknown crook. Gavot lit a cigarette, satisfied. All that remained now was for him to get the parcel post package containing the money when it was returned in thirty days.

The police car skidded to a halt in front of Dermott's apartment. Somewhere across town the ambulance siren wailed.

They went up the elevator, and Renn tried the door. It was locked.

"Dermott and I were partners," Gavot said. "I have a key."

They went into the room. A peculiar, musty odor was in the stale warm air, and the place was as silent as death. The hall door opening on Dermott's bedroom and adjoining kitchenette was tight shut. Somewhere there was a faint whispering hiss of sound, like wind against the windows.

Sergeant Renn and Dr. Brindon were bending over a small bottle of colorless liquid on a table at one side.

"Chloroform," said the doctor. "I wonder if he intended to take this?"

NOW YOU'RE COOKIN', KILLER!

So Dermott had, after all, failed to drink the chloroform! An unreasoning sense of anger burned along Phil Gavot's nerves. Still, he realized, no harm was done. The carbon-dioxide gas from the dry ice would have done its deadly work anyhow, and Gavot had an unbreakable alibi.

He turned toward the closed door walking fast, his cigarette tight-clenched in his mouth.

Sergeant Renn said sharply, "Where are you going?"

"Dermott's room is in here," Gavot said.

Finding Dermott's body was a job for the police, but a grim urgency rode Gavot's nerves.

"I'm taking the easy way out. You think I'm kidding?"

Do you think I'm kidding? Those words lurked puzzlingly in a deep corner of Gavot's mind, but he didn't search for an answer. He was driven by a savage, morbid curiosity to see, to know if Dermott was dead.

The whispering hiss of sound seemed louder where Gavot halted at the closed door, the musty odor stronger, more penetrating. The hissing sound was almost like gas escaping from open cocks in a stove. Phil Gavot thought of that, but it was a thready thought that didn't warn him in time.

He opened the door. The tip of his cigarette seemed to flare out a blinding sheet of scorching blue-white flame that leaped through the entire hall of the apartment.

Phil Gavot was aware of that, of a swift stab of fear and horror. He heard the beginning of the explosion, but he never heard the end of it. Nor did he feel the pain he should have felt. . . .

"It's a wonder you and I weren't killed, too, Renn," Dr. Brindon said later. "Dermott decided on gas because it was quicker and easier than chloroform. Gavot should have waited."

Sergeant Renn said with a trace of regret, "I'm sorry I ever had the idea Gavot might have had something to do with the robbery of his own safe. He was too straight for a job like that. He was killed because he was too anxious about the life of his friend."

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FLYNN'S DETECTIVE FICTION

(Continued from page 88)

WITH this issue of the magazine, "Solving Cipher Secrets" begins its twentieth year! The first installment of the department appeared in our issue for December 13, 1924. And thanks to the interest of our many faithful cryptofans, "SCS" has continued without a break since that time. We should like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for this loyal support, and sincerely hope that the department will continue to please you.

To fittingly start off our twentieth year, a new series of cipher puzzles opens in this issue. See if you can solve them all and get a "complete"! For the information of newcomers, however, we might add that a single solution will list you in our monthly *Cipher Solvers' Club,* which will also include your total score as your answers accumulate to your credit. Answers and cipher contributions for the department may be signed with your name, initials, or a cryptonym or pen name.

°ICC Members for June-Aug., 1943

Number	Name	Date	Score
280.	°Wm. G. Ringer	June	1,009
281.	°Ruth	June	1,007
282.	°Clarence P. Greene.....	July	1,000
283.	°Hayrake	Aug.	1,003

When your total solving score reaches 100, 500, or 1000 answers, you automatically become a member of our †*Hundred Club,* **Five Hundred Club,* or °*Inner Circle Club,* as the case may be, with a dagger, star, or degree prefixed to your name as a distinguishing mark. The latest group of °ICC entrants is given herewith.

And in addition to these, two more cryptofans have recently qualified for **Five Hundred Club* membership, *Y. M. Reyna and *Pearlie Glen; and six others have scored 100 each, necessary for †*Hundred Club* admission, †John L. Phillips, †Ziryab, †Pvt. Milton Peterkofsky, †Miss Tick, †Athol L. Durrell, and †Sourdough. To these latest club recruits we extend our heartiest congratulations! Keep up the good work, everyone!

Other lists of club entrants will appear at frequent intervals.

And now for the explanation of No. X-130, the Double Acrostic by †Soixante-Quinze, which appeared in our last issue. In the following translation of the cryptogram, the acrostical letters are capitalized: *"madaMe'S YaWn refleCtEd bOrEdom UnTil uNcLe's atTrActive bRuNette, YoDeling TrOvatore, brIeFly SoLiloquized, hOpIng afFaBle parTiEs abHoRred blEaTers evErYwhere."* Take the first capitalized letter in each word in order, then similarly the second capitalized letter, and you will find these two 18-letter acrostics: "MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE, SWEET LAND OF LIBERTY." Another set of cipher puzzles will appear in the next issue, together with the solutions of the current lot. And don't forget,

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

fans, keep your answers and contributions coming!

No. 11—Cryptic Division. By *Laird. The three-word key phrase is divided and numbered thus: *01 234 56789.*

```
N O D ) H A N W H N ( H I C
        E I H N
          O C H H
          O W D N
            D I D N
            D A H W
              D H N
```

ANSWERS FOR LAST ISSUE

122—"For you, who went West, it shall be forever Spring, and only you on silvery twilight pillows shall take your rest in the soft, sweet glooms of twilight rooms."—Hueffer.

123—"Why does our mathematics professor get only three thousand dollars, while the football coach makes ten?" "Did you ever hear sixty thousand persons cheer a math. recitation?"

124—Water with salt alone will allegedly support human life longer than water with food from which every trace of salt has been eliminated.

125—Six other state capitals are much closer in geographical location to Murphy, North Carolina, than its own capital city, Raleigh.

126—Anisoiconia, involving unequal visual images in right and left eyes, may now be measured by instrument recently developed by scientists.

127—Chemical wizardry juggles farm crops, oil-well output, finds butadiene, basic source yielding innumerable synthetic combinations, miracle materials, plastic pool for post-war products.

128—Rattan palm vine attains thousand-foot length, thereby achieving distance record for plant kingdom. Palm appropriately takes palm!

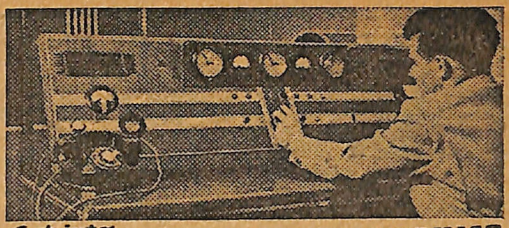
129—Brusque bandit badgers bathing beauty behind balcony. Bronzed baronet, bearing bayonet, belabors brigand. Bluecoat brings brougham, bastile bound. Bailiff books brazen bounder.

130—Pseudo psalmist palmed psalter, sang psalm from psalmody, accompanying self upon psaltery. Accommodating psalmographer sighed, "Pshaw!"

131—Saboteurs jeopardize metropolis. Fiendish atrocities include strike propagation, arson, radicalism, mayhem, murder. Shrewd cop corrals clique expeditiously. Democratic victory!

132—Key:

All answers to Nos. 1-11 will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club.* Address: M. E. Ohaver, *Flynn's Detective Fiction,* Popular Publications, Inc., 205 E. 42nd St., New York, N. Y.



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